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ABSTRACT

This new serial publication is designed to provide teachers, administrators, and policy makers who work with English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students with a forum for presenting innovations, concerns, and recommendations related to the schooling of language minority students. The main section of the publication, "Describing Our Experiences," uses a case study format to present interviews of four school principals and one state agency official. The principals, who are identified by pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity, answered questions about their schools and their leadership styles in relation to the struggle of providing for the educational needs of language minority students. Roberto Zamora, executive assistant to the commissioner of the Texas Education Agency (TEA), answered questions about the agency's leadership role in regard to testing and assessment of language minority students. Following each interview is an assessment of each interviewee's strengths and leadership style. Other sections of the publication include: (1) "Point of View," which presents an article on the current ESL assessment criteria developed by the TEA; (2) "Practice and Research," with an article on teacher-directed research in the classroom; (3) a reader response survey; and (4) a preview of the next issue. (MDM)

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DISCOVERING OUR EXPERIENCES:

Studies in Bilingual/ESL Education

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

FALL 1993

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Discovering Our Experiences: Studies in Bilingual/ESL Education

Fall 1993

"Leadership for Change
in Bilingual/ESL Education"

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Dedication

This volume is dedicated to the leaders profiled herein, and the many others like them who work with diligence, heart, and courage to provide the best education possible for language minority children.

Series Editor's Preface

Discovering Our Experiences: Studies in Bilingual/ESL Education is a serial publication for teachers, principals, program directors, coordinators, and policy makers who work with language minority students and their educational programs. The purpose of the publication is to provide a forum for presenting innovations, concerns, and recommendations related to the schooling of this unique population. The case studies format, using interviews of practitioners is designed to provide the reader access to their day-to-day, real-life situations and thus, hopefully, contribute to a better understanding of the educational process for language minority students. In the process of providing a platform for practitioners to share their successes and struggles with each other, we also hope to open communication between the stakeholders in our educational system and the policy makers who at times seem unaware of the concerns of the professionals in the field.

Rationale for Creation of Publication

Recent educational reform efforts have underscored the need to inform the educational community of the unique characteristics of language minority students. In order to meet their needs, practitioners and policy makers must advance and incorporate innovations that facilitate both excellence and equity. The challenge of change is stronger now, perhaps more than ever, in light of the struggles facing educators in general, and the staggering social ills tugging at our sleeves. The changing demographics of our state and the nation provides sufficient evidence to convince even the most resistant audience: 50 percent of our state's school population is minority; over 16 percent is categorized as in need of bilingual education while a large number of students formerly in bilingual education still need ESL-based instruction; over 80 languages are represented among school-age bilingual students in Texas, with 90 percent of bilingual students speaking Spanish as their second language. However, the most dismal facts are found in the statewide statistics that report the high drop-out rate amongst Hispanics and African Americans, and in the existing discrepancy of school drop-out and college attendance rates between minority and Anglo students. In some areas, minority students have a high school drop-out rate of as much as 60 percent!

Questions Need to Be Asked

What are the successful practices that focus on improving the educational process for the language minority children? How are these implemented by principals and teachers? What are the concerns of the practitioners and what can policy makers learn from them? These are only a few basic questions that we highlight in these issues. In our premiere issue we focus on "leadership." The interview narratives in the first section were interviewed, transcribed and edited by a team consisting of a faculty member, program coordinator/editor and graduate research assistant, all of which are members of the Texas Woman's University community.

Interactive and Informative Format

Perhaps the most innovative aspect of this publication is the format. Besides the case studies, we also invite and will include reader comments, editorials and other related experimental formats. The procedure is as easy as dialing our toll-free number, (800) 863-5408, or writing us at the address below. We are especially interested in including ideas or other innovations that have been implemented by our readers who are teachers or principals. In the "Practice of Research" section, we present timely ideas and other information derived from research of the cutting edge quality. And, in the "Point of View," section, authors are provided an opportunity to reflect on perspectives raised in the cases presented, and generate discussion on ways to improve the educational process.

Next Volume: "Teacher as Researcher"

The next volume will focus on cases in which teachers have played the role of teacher as researcher. Featured articles will offer specific suggestions and ideas on how teachers can learn invaluable lessons through self-designed research. We invite our readers to contribute ideas, personal accounts, or comments for this and subsequent volumes of Discovering Our Experiences: Studies in Bilingual/ESL Education.

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Discovering Our Experiences: Studies in Bilingual/ESL Education

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Irma Guadarrama is assistant professor in the department of reading and bilingual education and program director of three Title VII grants. She directs the Mentor Teacher Training and Resource Center and contributes to its newsletter and other major publications. Her research interests include strategies for developing collaborative learning communities including universities, districts, and schools, and leadership styles and their effects on restructuring bilingual education programs.

Flora Roebuck, professor in the department of educational leadership, coordinates the student teaching program. Her research interests include teaching excellence for instructional effectiveness and interpersonal skills in the classroom. She has provided teacher training for health care instruction in nine developing countries.

Lockie Machado has been grant coordinator and editor of various publications, including a quarterly newsletter, the Mentor Teacher Network, of the Mentor Teacher Resource Center for three years. She is also design editor for Bilingual Basics, newsletter for the bilingual education interest section of TESOL, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

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Introduction

Discovering our Experiences: Studies in Bilingual/ESL Education was created with two purposes in mind. First, we want to provide an example for our readers of one of the forms of action research and inform them of the variety of research options available. Thus, we hope to encourage others to engage in their own research of their unique educational settings.

Second, we invite our readers to become a part of a collegial exchange about real challenges and problems in actual classrooms and schools so that, in the process of sharing the problems, we may find solutions.

For these reasons, our maiden issue is divided into several sections united by the common theme of leadership. The first section, "Describing Our Experiences," contains interviews of four principals and one state agency official. The principals answered questions about their schools and their leadership styles in relation to the struggle of providing for the educational needs of language minority students. We assigned each principal a pseudonym in an attempt to preserve anonymity. Dr. Roberto Zamora, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner of the Texas Education Agency, answers questions about the agency's leadership role in regard to testing and assessment of language minority students.

Following each interview is a "Reflections" section, in which Dr. Irma Guadarrama, Managing Editor and professor in the Department of Reading and Bilingual Education at Texas Woman's University, provides an assessment of each interviewee's strengths and leadership style.

The next section, "Point of View," contains another article by Dr. Guadarrama focusing on the current assessment criteria developed by TEA and includes suggestions for change.

The "Practice of Research" section features an article by Dr. Flora Roebuck, professor in the Department of Educational Leadership at Texas Woman's University. She provides a helpful summary of various forms of research emphasizing the feasibility of doing research in the classroom. Dr. Roebuck also requests that readers participate in a survey, either by mail or by calling our toll-free number.

Our final section, "Preview of Our Next Issue," introduces the next theme of "Teacher as Researcher." We present a problem taken from a teacher's experience in a classroom in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, and ask readers to call our 800 number to let us know how they might respond. The responses we receive by mail or by phone will be included in our next issue.

We encourage readers to respond to any part of the publication by calling our toll free number, (800) 863-5408. Readers wishing to write may do so by using the following address: Dr. Irma Guadarrama, Dept. of Reading and Bilingual Education, P. O. Box 23029, Denton, Texas, 76204-1029.

It is our hope that you enjoy and profit from the interviews of these fine leaders as much as we enjoyed putting them together.

Leading by Example: A Principal's Journey

Maria Espinosa was director of the bilingual/ESL program with a large Texas independent school district, and has worked extensively with a regional service center. After moving to the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, Ms. Espinosa served one year as an assistant principal at a high school as dean of instruction, and she has been principal at Ferguson Elementary* for three years. In all, Ms. Espinosa has 23 years of experience in education.*

Ferguson Elementary consists of 504 students, 70 percent of which is Hispanic. Of the 70 percent, 56 percent are LEP, and of those 20 percent are recent immigrants. Ninety eight percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch because of the intense poverty of the families the school serves.

Following is a summary of an interview with Ms. Espinosa conducted by Irma Guadarrama, Ph.D., assistant professor at Texas Woman's University, and program director for three Title VII grant programs.

** Name has been changed.*

The Leadership Challenge

The first time I came to Ferguson, the building was empty, dirty and run down. It smelled bad. I went to Physical Plant and met with my head custodian and requested cleaning, painting, and repairs. Children need an environment that is clean and conducive to learning. Then, I met with my head secretary to see if we could get money for decent furniture, because all the furnishings were old and torn. Our facility was built 22 years ago as a temporary structure and today it is housing more children than ever intended.

> *What I had to do was obvious: I had to get the school to work together. There were some pockets of people working together, but there was no leadership.*

As I looked through the files, I found the Texas Education Agency had been there the year before and noted about 25 areas that were not in compliance with state guidelines. The list included: no cross-level articulation among faculty members; too many children accepted into the special education program; too many exemptions for deficiencies in library holdings; and other serious problems regarding inappropriate instruction.

One of the things that came my way via the district was the school-wide Chapter One program. This was to serve all the children in the school, because as we help one student, she can in turn help another. Of the ten zones in the city, we are rated number eight—Ferguson was at the bottom in terms of test scores.

What I had to do was obvious: I had to get the school to work together. There were some pockets of people working together but there was no leadership. So, I took advantage of the name, "school-wide Chapter One," and started doing activities immediately that required no training or money, like the authorship program with my librarian. She, together with a committee of teachers from all grade levels, including bilingual and regular classrooms, came up with an author the whole school would study and the children's work would reflect this. The first author was Joana Cole, and all the writing centered around The Magic Bus. Each teacher would get his or her particular topic or theme and run it through The Magic Bus in English and in Spanish, because both languages are seen as valid mediums for communication.

The next project implemented was a school-wide "Ferguson Book Buddies" program. Older children and younger children were paired to read together two or three times a week. Initially, the older children read to the younger ones, but now they take turns.

As the students heard that the principal validated their language over the loud speaker, they knew it was all right to speak Spanish. It was even more than all right; they began to take pride in their native language like I have never seen before.

They share not just books but personal writings; it's part of our day. Sometimes we find out about a tragic home life, which in turn gets communicated to the counselor. These experiences have ramifications way beyond the curriculum. We mix bilingual and nonbilingual youngsters to give them opportunities to work to together socially and linguistically on common academic turf.

Teacher to Teacher

The object of these initial school-wide projects was to get the staff to gel as a group. Each month a different part of our school community, both teachers and students, was represented by a special project. Among the projects were the writing of our school song, writing spooky stories, and writing Valentine appreciation letters. For the spooky stories project, we got people from the recreation center to be judges, and the winners were awarded pumpkins. As time went by, we had more and more teachers working together, coming up with ideas, explaining them to their colleagues, and carrying them out. I only supported it. That was the end of the first year.

Next, the teachers and I wanted a curriculum representative of the child's culture. During my observations of the bilingual classrooms, I heard very little Spanish. Bilingual teachers were my first concern because of the high percentage of Hispanics at Ferguson. I knew that the parents of these children probably didn't speak English yet, and I wanted to preserve the communication in our families and make the children and their parents feel as comfortable as possible. Once the teachers realized that I really wanted Spanish to be used, and that I valued the language, they began to value the language as well.

The children began to hear me over the intercom, *"Buenos días niños, por favor se ponen de pie para el juramento a la bandera."* As the children heard that the principal validated their language over the loud speaker, they knew it was all right to speak Spanish. It was even more than all right; they began to take pride in their native language like I have never seen before. That was a big change for this school.

Next, we started spending our budget to build up our library in Spanish because I couldn't find any Spanish language books, even though there were state adoptions. Now, youngsters can have reference materials in Spanish as well as other books to read.

The configuration of our school was changed to "families" consisting of kindergarten through third grade, with about four to six teachers per family...Teachers worked out the details for planning the days, weeks, and months, placing children's needs before grade-level assignments.

Family Dynamics

The configuration of our school was then changed to "families" consisting of kindergarten through third grade, with about four to six teachers per family. The particular needs of the youngsters in each family were the responsibility of those teachers. Teachers worked out the details necessary for planning the days, weeks, and months, placing the children's needs before grade-level assignments. For example, a kindergartener may go write with a first or third grade group. It gives the youngsters opportunities to have their academic

needs taken care of without the stigma of being retained. Grouping is fluid so that a second grader may be reading with first graders if it is necessary without causing any embarrassment, as may happen in the traditional grade level classroom. Children are re-grouped with regard to interest and ability. That was another big change for us.

Instruction became more focused on activity rather than paper and pencil outcomes. Working on projects such as our language festival was a very successful experience. For the language festival, each family did research on a country. As they did the research, they were able to display it in different ways like with costumes, music, food, and entertainment. The children were issued passports to visit countries such as Australia, China, Italy, Turkey, Mexico, and Switzerland, spending an entire six weeks learning about each country. The children were the tour guides, using information they got from each other as well as from other people. This project was initiated and directed entirely by teachers.

The next change was in our use of technology. I dismantled a computer lab and put all the computers right into the classrooms in clusters of four to six. Now, the computers are right where the children are. The children watch teachers write, and they write. The third graders trained the kindergarteners after they learned, and the second graders worked with the first graders. We saw the older children bringing the younger children into the computer modality—children helping children acquire computer skills.

I give teachers encouragement in their boxes and praise in our meetings. Our meetings are no longer for disseminating information—I use the bulletin board for that. Instead, we use them for staff development.

Earning the Right to Make Changes

Change will come if supported by a higher authority like evaluations from Texas State Teacher Association, but more importantly teachers see that I am in the classrooms two or three times a day. Being there, I know the children, not only those sent to the office for discipline purposes, but the children doing well. I see the interaction between teachers and the children. I know first hand how something worked in the classroom, instead of receiving second-hand information. I give teachers encouragement in their boxes, and praise in our meetings. Our meetings are no longer for disseminating information—I use the bulletin board for that. Instead, we use our meetings for staff development. I have a whole bunch of books explaining the writing process and shared reading to help child-centered instruction. It is the teachers' job to try it and to share what was new, different, and exciting in their classrooms with their colleagues. The teachers really did it themselves, but it took a great deal of encouragement from me, and it took showing them by my actions that I indeed supported these behaviors in their classrooms.

Philosophical Shift

While working with the staff of a regional service center in the area of curriculum and instruction, I had the opportunity to come in contact with experts who endorsed whole-language teaching approaches for language minority children. One thing had always bothered me: How can we precisely control the phonetic information for youngsters? It wasn't until coming into contact with whole language that I began to see a different way of approaching it. Our hang up was that we believed that children should not go into English until they have totally mastered Spanish. Well, there is something wrong here because no one can master anything totally to any given point, especially a six-, seven-, or eight-year-old, when there is so much linguistic interaction going on that we don't control!

When I opened up my reasoning, I looked at education in a different light. I started reading Lucy Calkins, the work going on in Australia, the writing process. I interfaced with teachers in a different way. I found teachers willing to work with me. And in three years, we turned around the program. We brought interdisciplinary teaching into the middle school for language acquisition.

Sharing Power

In the beginning, it was to my advantage never to have been a principal because I didn't know how it was supposed to work. I just could envision the school I would like to teach in. Basically, the teachers would ask questions and I would say, "Well, I don't know, what do you think?" In my first year we had an interdisciplinary consultation team to advise me. What the teachers wanted to happen was happening. Gradually, our faculty advisory council meetings began to change from "gripe sessions" to positive discussions. Testing concerns were addressed, and month after month things were controlled more and more by them. We not only talked about changes, we were actually making the changes teachers wanted.

I asked the bilingual teachers, "Why aren't you using more books in Spanish? Why aren't you bringing in the children's culture into the classroom?" They didn't know. In the past, they had always complied with the principal's philosophy and I think prior to me it was, "Let's keep pretty much to English."

Since I had no history as a principal, they judged me on what they saw: I was in the classroom all the time; I was talking curriculum and instruction with them; I was sharing my books; I was letting them make decisions. For example, I asked the bilingual teachers, "Why aren't you using more books in Spanish? Why aren't you bringing in the children's culture into the classroom?" They didn't know. In the past, they had always complied with the principal's philosophy and I think prior to me it was, "Let's keep pretty much to English." So, for our school implementation program, (and every school should have one) I said, "Let's go back and say what we really want, and let's do what we really want." I asked, "What shall we continue to do from our new implementations?" They chose to continue the school-wide authorship program. Although I planted the seed, they were excited about it because they got involved in planning and implementing it. In other words, if they hadn't been given the opportunity to make those decisions, I don't think the program would have survived.

This year we have a council to represent the multi-level families. The representatives meet once a week from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. while the kids are reading to each other and student assistants and others cover the classes.

At first teachers looked at me to see what I was going to do. I just sat there, had my coffee, and sat there some more. After they realized I wasn't going to do anything but wait for them and bite my tongue, they got things rolling.

At first, teachers looked at me to see what I was going to do. I just sat there, had my coffee, and sat there some more. After they realized I wasn't going to do anything but wait for them and bite my tongue, they got things rolling. Now, we have meetings and if you were to walk in, you wouldn't even know who the principal was.

Teachers take the role of representing families on the council very seriously now because they realize the influence they can have. I am beginning to see strong, organized and creative people taking on this responsibility.

I had nine new teachers this year because some teachers terminated, retired, or transferred. All nine believe in child-centered education, whole language, and honoring the children's culture and language.

*If we know how to have good relationships, we can do this job. This is a human **being** type of job, not a human **doing** type of job...We're here to serve and guide these children toward the lofty goal of becoming life-long learners.*

Drawbacks of Site-Based Management

I don't know if what we do here at Ferguson can be called site-based management or if we are merely looking into the future and adopting the principles stated in Demming's work; that is, governance by team management rather than from the top down.

As far as I know, we are the only school that has planning as part of the day. Because we are human, it is tough to avoid many of the pitfalls—politics at the building level. I have not formed allegiances with any one group, and I have to keep reminding them not to be like the folks downtown—I say, "Don't bring those politics in here. We are here for the children."

Innovation and Teacher Input

We got to participate in an Instructional Fair sponsored with federal funds for high school dropout prevention. We were given training and money to listen to Dr. Hank Levin's whole language philosophies. He said, "Build on the child's strengths, not remediation. What is best for the best is best for everyone."

There are three components to his model: a high interest curriculum, an activity-based instructional program, and site-based management by teachers and principals that facilitate and serve as guiding lights.

One of the things Dr. Levin talks about is that children can teach other children better than we can, and if we stand back and facilitate they will take over. But that's a hard thing for us because as teachers, we do not want to give up control. And, as principal, it was difficult for me to give up control.

However, after I attended a session at NABE in Albuquerque, I began to open up to the faculty members that wanted to apply new ideas in the multi-age grouping program. The first year, everyone thought that I wanted them to apply. In looking over the applications I found many were applying out of compliance and not because they wanted to. So then, I made them write a formal proposal to me and tell me what strengths they would bring to multi-age schooling. At that time no one had training, nor did we know what we wanted to do. From those applicants I made choices based on the strengths of their ideas. The key word was flexibility. I was looking for teachers willing to be flexible and work with other teachers. As much as we talk the game, we don't walk it because we all like to do our own thing.

After my initial selection, I asked the teachers to select which ideas they wanted to be involved with to ensure their ownership of the program. Then, they worked together this year. Out of the three families, only one family remains intact. The others are reorganizing at their request.

The dynamics of a group all boil down to relationships, and if we know how to have good relationships, we can do this job. This is a human **being** type of job not a human **doing** type of job. As a result of this experience, teachers have learned to look out for certain characteristics in each other. The family that remained intact was more flexible—three out of the four teachers are self-confident, self-assured teachers. Many of the personality clashes were a result of teachers feeling threatened. If you feel threatened, you go for control or you just give up and do not do anything.

From those applicants I made choices based on the strengths of their ideas. The key word was flexibility. I was looking for teachers willing to be flexible and work with other teachers.

Unless some teachers go through major therapy and make changes in their lives, they cannot work with other teachers. They may feel it is because they are so much more advanced than the other teachers, but I see it differently.

Role of the Principal

It is difficult to move forward without being both a visionary and a good manager. I will be honest with you, I have more vision than I do organizational skills, so I make sure I surround myself with people that can help me organize. I tell them to help keep me honest. In turn, I give them some parameters. I will say, "I'd really like to see something like ..." because I am a very global thinker. They will come back and say, "Oh, this is what you mean." They will give it to me in a much more detailed format. But I do believe, unless the principal continues reading, continues growing, continues going to conferences, continues talking to people like [Guadarrama], unless we continue to interact at this level of thinking, there will be no vision. You can have a very well-organized, well-meaning school, but with a limited range of what children will be capable of doing.

Assessment Issues

First, I'm not here to earn prizes like the Mary Kay pink Cadillac. We are dealing with valuable, delicate lives—much too delicate for me to put a price tag on. We're here to serve and guide these children toward the lofty goal of becoming life-long learners. I believe that if children are given an opportunity to explore, if they're read to, if they're given a chance to write and think every single day, their test scores will eventually show that. If we first center around helping the child be "number one," then the test scores will follow.

I could see in this school why the test scores were plummeting after I studied the history of how these children were taught. Someone came in and said, "You will not use anymore Spanish." Well, you can't cut the mother tongue from our children and expect them to feel like worthwhile individuals and learners. I don't believe you can sever concern for children's feelings from the other criteria for an effective school. You have to look at the total well-being of the community. And, if you look after the well-being of the community, your test scores will reflect that.

Attitudes of Colleagues

My colleagues in the educational community know I'm a little different—crazy—and that I do not react to things the way somebody else would because I have never been a principal. I have been an administrator, but not here. I brought my own brand of principalship.

Training Prerequisites

Training that is well-grounded in curriculum and instructional issues is crucial for the principal, and on organizational issues. The Dupont training brings in focus ideas on how to produce the best thinking possible for the common good of an organization, but that is one concept that is really hard to implement.

Decreasing Dropout

As long as instruction is interesting, as long as students feel their culture, their families, and what they stand for is an important part of the school, and as long as they are involved and challenged, I believe we'll have children that want to grow and learn. But, the key is to make children think for themselves within certain established parameters. Teach choice and selection. Some parents say to me, "Ms. Espinosa, I can't believe you can't control a six-year-old." But it's not about control. It's about teaching children how to make decisions and providing meaningful consequences.

Do You Have a Question or a Comment?

Call our toll-free number,
(800) 863-5408, and leave a message
on our answering machine.
You may remain anonymous.

Reflections

Ms. Espinosa brings a fresh perspective to her role as principal partly due to her experiences in curriculum development for bilingual education and leadership training. But also, she has a life-long commitment to improving educational opportunities for all children, incorporating her intelligent views on innovation in the schooling process. These factors contribute to the flexibility and innovation she exhibits in her leadership style.

Among the changes which she and her staff have initiated that hold promise for the overall improvement in students' educational achievement are:

- School-wide literacy projects;
- Promotion of the importance of the community's role in the educational process by involving parents and incorporating the native language and culture into the school culture;
- Re-location of computers from the computer labs to the classrooms;
- Multi-age schooling; and
- Focus on developing positive and productive teacher-teacher and teacher- student relationships.

By being a well-informed and skillful leader, Ms. Espinosa has achieved many of her goals. Among the most effective strategies she has used are:

- Creation and effective use of faculty advisory;
- Providing a nurturing environment for teachers as leaders; and
- Applying a well-anchored philosophy that includes child-centered curriculum, a balanced reading program, valuing and incorporating children's language and culture in the curriculum, and governance by team management.

Ms. Espinosa's views on assessment are practical and sensible. The following statement from her interview gives us an indication of her beliefs on the topic: "I believe that if children are given an opportunity to explore, if they're read to, if they're given a chance to write and think every single day, their test scores will eventually show that."

Her early successes as a principal have not gone unnoticed. Recently, Ms. Espinosa was honored with the "Administrator of the Year" award by her peers in a local education organization.

Innovation: Doing What Needs to Be Done

Adriana Hidalgo grew up in a south Texas city with two school districts, one consisting of Hispanics and African Americans, and the other primarily consisting of Anglo students. As a student in the minority school district, she remembers the teachers expecting a great deal from her and the other students without distinction based on color or class, which contributed to building her self-esteem. Hidalgo graduated in 1968, a year before they consolidated the school districts. Then, she went to a university in central Texas where she received her education degree.*

The foundation of her educational philosophy, influenced as it was by her father and by her own educational experiences, is the belief that everyone should have the same opportunities, regardless of race or color. She has taught at every level and has been trained in and has used many different educational approaches.

While a teacher in south Texas, Hidalgo completed her master's degree by going to school in the summers. Then, she decided to work on her doctorate and moved to Dallas to attend a nearby university and became principal at Excalibur Elementary. She has been in education for 23 years, 10 as an administrator.*

The following is a summary of an interview with Ms. Hidalgo conducted by Irma Guadarrama.

** Name has been changed*

Excalibur was founded in 1920 as a prep school. The school has only had five principals in 64 years.

Beginnings at Excalibur

In 1979, I came to teach fourth, fifth, and sixth grade, and I had all the bilingual students, three sections. When the TABS was initiated and my kids scored higher than the regular kids, no one could believe it. I always believed in projects, thinking, and parental involvement. The kids always did presentations. We have some teachers here today that were here when I taught. They still remember that at the end of the year we would have "museums" upstairs. The classrooms were set up as museums and the children would guide the tours and they would have to do all the research. Every month we had plays. Every child had to perform and they did really well.

Innovative Environment

Although my principal supported my use of innovative techniques, the administrators that were over him would monitor and observe. I was always called in because I was unorthodox. He would have to go through the process of debriefing and conferencing.

The administration expected the children not to do well. But I told the students, "There is nothing I can teach you that you don't already know. My job is to pull it out of you, and show it to you; to mold it, to change it and give it back to you because it's yours. The people that do the test are doing it to trick you and you know more than they know, so take your time." We always tell them these sort of things. I think it's one of the most important things we do at Excalibur. We tell them that all the time--"You know it, we're depending on you. You've got it, you can change it. It's within your power. It's not us. You're more powerful than we are. So take it. Do the best you can with it."

I taught from 1979 to 1983, and in 1983, I became an assistant principal at another school, where I stayed until 1988. Then, after 18 years, the principal at Excalibur retired. He said since I had worked under him, he and the community got together, they screened a lot of people and decided I was to be the next principal. They went to the Board and suggested me as principal, and that's how I got my job. This is my fourth year as principal.

The School

Excalibur was founded in 1920 as a prep school. The school has only had five principals in 64 years. They stay a long time. That's a nice thing too. Teachers come and they stay. The only reason they move on is retirement or their husbands are transferred. And, it is the same

thing with the children. We have kids whose parents I taught in fifth grade! It is a cycle. Teachers, kids and principals. That is a fact people don't look at very often. Only one out of one hundred of our students move to another school.

We are 85 percent Hispanic, five percent Anglo and the rest is a combination of Asian and Native American. Everybody cooperates. The families we serve are low as to socio-economic status but are very stable. Some families have been here more than five generations.

The Hispanic population has grown since I taught here. Only fourth through sixth grades had bilingual classes back then. Now, there are approximately 30 sections.

Independence Encourages Stability

They have always said Excalibur is like an independent school district. It does what it thinks should be done. The former principal would stick his neck out. If you thought it was good methodology or a good technique and could prove to him that it was by results, well that was OK with him. He really didn't care as long as you could do it. And, he would back you up. It's like that now. The parents say the same thing. They take their kids out, send them to another school and are back two or three weeks later saying, "My kid is way ahead of the children in that other school."

It's the high expectations that we have. Everyone believes they are above average in what they do, and we have the children's best interests in mind.

The profile of students has changed and we've had to change with it. So our attitudes and expectations are the same, but we arrive at them from a different angle.

The teachers tell me we have a feeling of family. We try to communicate that to our children. We say, "Yes, I am your mother and father when you are in school. We'd do the same for you as they'd do at home."

Successful Family

We have won the Governor's Excellence Award and the district's academic award. All of our teachers received $1,000 and the school got $2,000. Our teachers have been recognized as Teacher of the Year, and the children have received awards too.

There is a feeling of tradition at Excalibur. The teachers tell me we have a feeling of family. We try to communicate that to our children. We say, "Yes, I am your mother and father when you are in school. We'd do the same for you as they'd do at home." However, with the former principal, everything was very structured and authoritative. Teachers didn't have to think. When I came in, I told them that was not my style, and that we were going to have to work with each other. My style is to ask the teachers to present their ideas. If the idea holds water, do it. We share the rewards and the consequences alike.

We needed to understand that more and more of our students were drug babies, latch-key kids, immigrants, and kids whose parents wanted to take them out of school so they could work. When the demographics changed, we had five percent white flight. But things have stabilized now.

Leadership Style

I just don't like confines. I like to know the parameters of certain jobs or situations, and then investigate beyond that. I modify. I don't have difficulty with the teachers that already knew my style. We were friends, and some had visited my classroom so they understood what I was doing. Thirteen teachers did not. They would not go with my style. The way I heard it was, "She doesn't communicate." So, I asked what it was they could not understand. It takes two people, one to hear and one to speak. When they started telling me what they didn't like, I realized they were not used to having to think. So they left.

My philosophy is that not everybody is good for everybody, and I may not be the principal for you, just as you may not be the right teacher for every student. This is an obstacle we constantly run into. If a student is not working well with a teacher, then we remove him. That doesn't mean that she is a bad teacher; she's just not the right one for him. This is why we make it so easy to move our students. We have clustering; sometimes it's 66 or 100 students for four teachers, and they regroup them constantly. A

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Students can hear an objective or be taught a lesson in three, four, or five different ways. They have more opportunities to learn within the time limit. There is no longer that constraint of time—45 minutes for language arts, 45 minutes for math. They have big blocks of time—two and a half hours.

teacher may say, "He can't get math with me, so I will send him over to somebody else." So the child is not losing.

Resisting Retention

We have had only 15 retainees out of 1,038 students in the whole school. Teachers understand that I don't believe in retention unless everything else has been tried. We believe in the premise of developmental learning stages. For example, I should not be punished if it takes me 50 times to pass the driving test while it only took you three times. The Department of Public Safety doesn't punish you. They don't ask how many times you practiced. You went when you were ready. This is the philosophy I have about retention. Even if a child needs extra time to learn a particular thing, he shouldn't be punished by being retained—he needs to go on anyway. Eventually it's going to click for him.

Also, from my experience as a student I know that many times Hispanics were referred to special education because they did not know what they were expected to know. If you didn't know, you were considered retarded. That's something that is always in the back of my mind. So, at this school, we don't refer to special education because of language—especially in the case of Hispanic, Native American, or African American children. In fact, we don't refer to special education unless we know everything else has been tried, a process that takes two years.

Openness of Staff

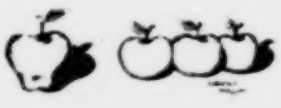
Fifty percent of our teachers have five years of experience or less. But teachers with more than five years of experience have to be open minded. (Those are few and far between.) I'm lucky the people here accept new ideas. The younger ones, we can mold. We have panel interviews for hiring, and explain to them what we are doing. We ask, "Is this for you?" And if it isn't, they know that within the first year they will get moved out. This being the fourth year, the difficult teachers have been weeded out. The teachers that stay are persuaded by peer pressure to align themselves with our philosophy. I have instilled in the staff the concept that they have not only the power but the responsibility as a member of a cluster to confront anyone who is not performing. It is their duty to ask, "How can I help you? What do we need to change? What is it you're having difficulty with?" If they cannot work it out, they come to me.

Clustering Dynamics

Teachers of a cluster plan together. They group the students together. At the end of every six weeks they identify who is failing, and ask, "Does that student need to change clusters or teachers?" They might try changing students around to see if it works.

Kindergarten, first, second, and part of third grade comprise a three-teacher cluster; fourth grade is a five-teacher cluster, with one self-contained classroom; fifth grade is a four-teacher cluster, with one self-contained classroom; and four teachers are called intermediates and teach first through fourth grades. Next year, we are going to initiate a multi-age, cross-culture unit because we see a need for that.

The teachers in each cluster plan together, meet together, and, as they told me not too long ago, it's like a marriage. They need to know how to congeal and come together as a group. When they don't congeal, we revamp for the next year. The people are moved without any negative feelings. They discovered they just couldn't work together.



Advantages of Clustering for Students

Students can hear an objective or be taught a lesson in three, four, or five different ways. They have more opportunities to learn within the time limit. There is no longer that constraint of time—45 minutes for language arts, 45 minutes for math. They have big blocks of time—two and a half hours. Therefore, when a child has to practice, he has plenty of time. For example, if a third grader needs to spend more time on a lesson he may do so, because his next cluster, say P.E., is an hour and a half long. Teachers can work the schedule out so that the child doesn't feel punished. Also, they don't have to take the work home, and sometimes our parents cannot help them.

Origin of Clustering Format

It was something I wanted to do because I would have cases (it is sad to say) where a child would come to tell me that he is trying. He has done his best but he just can't get it. The teacher doesn't like him. In the self-contained classroom, he would not be moved. We had to tell the child, "Look honey, this is a game you have to play. If the teacher wants you to have a pencil and paper ready, by all means, have it ready." We were asking the child to conform to the adult world. The child is not to conform, the child is the client. The adult is the one that needs to conform. So, when these children would come in here, I would think. "Why do I have to say they are going to have to do this? When they are that little, they shouldn't have to adjust for the teacher's sake."

It was something I wanted to do because I would have cases (it is sad to say) where a child would come to tell me that he is trying. He has done his best but he just can't get it. The teacher doesn't like him. In the self-contained classroom, he would not be moved.

So, I made the commitment that if I had the opportunity it was going to change. Then, after reading the research and visiting other schools I said, "If I ran a school, this is how I'd like to see it run, based on these sort of things."

Orienting the Teachers

When we started our clustering plan, I wanted the teachers to experience being students. So, during staff development I treated them like they were students. First of all, the assistant principal was very oriented toward the classroom and instruction. We were geared into the reading mode, comprehension skills, etc. So, we had to make the teachers experience the frustration of being a student who is expected to learn something difficult like statistics. They had to experience the feelings first, then change their attitudes. So, we did a lot of staff development. We did a great deal of reading. We visited schools in Houston, and brought speakers in from the regional service center. They had a full year of preparation, because I didn't change anything the first year. But I kept telling them, "This is the way we are going, and I want you to come with me. But if you can't come with me, then you need to look some place else." A majority of them decided to stay. We asked the teachers who they wanted to work with if they had a choice of anybody in the building. They were so indoctrinated that kindergarten always met together, first grade always met together, without any mixing of grades. So, we had to make sure the teachers had the opportunities to meet other teachers outside their grade levels socially. I would call faculty meetings for such mixers because some didn't know who the other teachers were.

We raised money to visit schools. We got a grant from the osteopathic association to visit schools with innovative programs. I took parents with me because I needed their support too. We had community meetings in the evening so parents could come and act like students and practice running through the schedules. We did a lot of work with students, parents, and teachers in order to get where we wanted to go. In the spring of 1992, we piloted for six weeks to work out the kinks, and the following year was full immersion into the plan.

The objective for making these changes and looking at other programs was to help the minority student. If these children can do so well, what more can they achieve? I would tell my

teachers, "You guys can't rest on your laurels. There is somebody out there that's better than you are." I wanted them to see it, because seeing is believing. So we went and found some kindergartners that were on the same level as our second graders. It was mind boggling. We began to ask, "What is it we're not doing?" So, we began to revamp and see what we could do. There was a big change of attitude in the teachers.

Problem-Solving

The counselor is very important as an intermediary. She is in a position where the teachers know that if they didn't agree with me and couldn't tell me, they could tell the counselor. And then the counselor would come and tell me their concerns. But I don't care how many times teachers disagree with me. I want them to feel free to do it. In fact, I would rather have them tell me than leave the room and undermine what we are doing. So, I encourage them to go ahead and tell me—just don't be ugly about it. I say, "You know, I won't yell at you, you won't yell at me." Because I can always go back and think, for example, "Maybe they do have a valid point. Maybe we are moving too fast. Maybe we should go back and reconsider."

And then, I would say to the teacher, "That's a great idea that you have," and we would implement it. She would feel a part of the team again. It takes a lot of talking and working with each other.

But I don't care how many times teachers disagree with me. I want them to feel free to do it. In fact, I would rather have them tell me than leave the room and undermine what we are doing. So, I encourage them to go ahead and tell me—just don't be ugly about it.

We are still workin; at communicating. Some teachers want me to step in and solve a conflict between themselves and other teachers. But I'm not going to intercede. I believe that if you don't like what someone else is doing, you need to find a way to say it to her. It's not my problem. So, my teachers work at it. Now, they come and tell me, "We need to have a meeting because we want to discuss the problems we're having." We come together, we talk, and we resolve it. They have to know sometimes you win, sometimes you don't. Sometimes it takes five or six days to resolve one issue.

Faculty Meetings

We don't have whole-faculty meetings, because meetings with individual clusters are scheduled by hour blocks all week long. By Friday I have met with every cluster. I don't run the meetings, I'm just a member. I'm there to answer questions and give guidance if needed.

The issues and concerns are different in each cluster. We keep minutes and we talk about it. Then the grade-level chairpersons will come to meet with me on Monday afternoons. I tell them the current thing that the district is doing or requiring, such as routine reports. And they, in turn go back to the cluster and do whatever needs to be done. But we only have big faculty meetings when I have to introduce new members to the faculty or administer a survey.

The Future

We are working on improving our curriculum. The teachers are working on it this summer without pay. They do whatever needs to be done, with some staying until 7:00 or 8:00 at night. We are all very committed.

Reflections

Even though Adriana Hidalgo had been exposed to traditional teaching and leadership styles, she was not reluctant to implement the changes she felt were needed and long overdue. She bases many of her ideas on her personal experiences and her work experiences of over 20 years.

Ms. Hidalgo's school is typical of many urban schools in its transformation process from a predominantly Anglo, middle-class school to one that is primarily minority with the majority of students being low on the socio-economic scale. Ms. Hidalgo promotes change in her school by focusing on teacher relationships with one another and with their students. Among the most notable innovative ideas mentioned by Ms. Hidalgo in the previous text are:

- Clustering or teaming of teachers and students across grade levels that serve to provide a cohesive, yet diverse program to meet the varied needs of the students (Ms. Hidalgo showed me the "giant planning book" used by the teams to map out their thematic units);
- Providing for gradual implementation of new ideas that included preparation time (for about a year) with focused staff development, research, and site visits to other model programs;
- Seeking support from the community: an organization donated funds to send staff and parents to visit other programs, and parents attended information meetings;
- Viewing implementation plans as an on-going process;
- Encouraging the school counselor to play a role of intermediary to ensure communication takes place;
- Maintaining low retention rates among students and carefully screening language minority students upon referrals for special education; and
- Carefully screening prospective teachers: employing panel interviews to ensure an effective process in hiring teachers.

Ms. Hidalgo's school has recently won the Governor's Excellence Award as well as the district's academic award. Among the accolades her staff has received is the district's Teacher of the Year award.

A Guiding Passion: Dedication to Children's Language Potential

Guadalupe Escamilla has been the principal of John Alexander Elementary* for seven years. Alexander, a kindergarten through third grade school, is 89 percent Hispanic, 54 percent of which are students identified as Limited English Proficient. Fifty one percent of the LEP population is enrolled in the bilingual program. Four percent of the student body is Asian and attends ESL programs.*

Following is a summary of an interview with Ms. Escamilla conducted by Irma Guadarrama.

** Name has been changed.*

Major Life Influences

The four years I taught in Crystal City, Texas, from 1977 to 1981, really made me what I am today. I interviewed for a job when I heard 85 percent of the teachers had left Crystal City because they did not like the idea of the Mexicans taking over. I was told I would be a second grade bilingual teacher. I said, "But I'm not elementary certified, I'm secondary. I don't know anything about little kids!" My superintendent Angel Gonzalez said, "Guadalupe, you're going to learn real fast." And he was absolutely right, because learn we did! *A puro trancaso.* It was brand new; we were all just starting out. Raza Unida had just won, and the whole nation was looking at us. We had to succeed. We had to show them that Mexicanos could be in control and could succeed.

I got to Crystal City ready to march; ready to fight, but all that was left was a lot of hard work. I learned so much those four years. I was in Teacher Corps and got my master's in elementary education with a minor in bilingual education. I supervised the bilingual program there. I was assistant principal, the first female administrator in Crystal City. I wrote curriculum. We were correcting history in this curriculum! That is what was so wonderful about it—*la verdadera historia del Alamo.* I mean the real stuff! Those experiences were invaluable. If it had not been for that, I would probably still be in the valley teaching and not having amounted to much. It took something as dramatic as what was going on in Crystal City to shake me up and move me out—plus, I am good. I am a hard worker and once I believe in something you always want me in your camp. I am a good and loyal friend. I will fight to the end. I will, that's just me.

It was brand new; we were all just starting out. Raza Unida had just won, and the whole nation was looking at us. We had to succeed. We had to show them that Mexicanos could be in control and could succeed.

Having been in Crystal really awakened me in terms of our people—our cause. When I saw people like José Angel Gutierrez fighting so hard to make things right for our people, I could not help but fall right in there. We did not do it for what was in it for us. Lord, it was all hard work! A salary of $6,000—thank you, Angel Gonzalez, but we did it because we believed in what was going on. Also, I had a lot of nurturing, a lot of push, from people who saw the potential in me. Angel Gonzalez, for one, kept pushing me to get my master's. José Angel said, "You can't settle for intern. You've got to be a team leader." I'd say, "I don't even know what a team leader is!" He'd say, "Everyone will learn at the same time." So I said, "Oh well, OK, I'll try it."

I have always been at the right place at the right time. From there I went to Anthony. I was Title VII director and I got to put that good experience from Crystal into practice at Anthony. It was more of a managerial position, so I learned the other side. In Austin, I was parental

I am a believer in bilingual education. When done well, it works beautifully. But when done wrong, it hurts our children tremendously. It is really important that whoever is in charge knows what she is doing, has a good qualified staff, and good materials.

involvement specialist. Then in Dallas, I was facilitator for the bilingual education program and a resource teacher.

Then I went back to La Jolla for a while and did it all there at the secondary level. I was in charge of ESL at the high school. Then, I became director of elementary education. So, I worked with all the principals there. I was in charge of all the programs, the gifted and talented, bilingual, computer, etc.

I have had a multitude of experiences. It's been great! Then, I came back to Dallas and this is my seventh year as a principal, and all my experiences have come together at this point of my life. I think it has worked out to my benefit.

View of the Progress Made

The questions we were asking back then were: "Do we need bilingual education?" "What about the materials?" (We were having to rely on Puerto Rican and teacher-made materials at the time.) "Why do we need bilingual education?" And today, twenty-two years later, we're still asking the same questions. You would think we would have progressed by now to asking, "How do we improve what we are doing?"

It is a shame that some people in our country have taken the stand that English is the language of the world and refuse to look at the definite advantages of bilingualism. I am a believer in bilingual education. When done well, it works beautifully. But when done wrong, it hurts our children tremendously. It is really important that whoever is in charge knows what she is doing, has a good qualified staff, and good materials.

The School

Before I arrived at Alexander, the bilingual program was equivalent to an English-only program. They called it bilingual but it was not that at all. They were using a whole-language strategy and the teachers were trained exceptionally well in the developmental language-experience charts to extract skills. Even though there was a great deal in place, native language instruction was practically non-existent. Kindergarten only had one and a half hours of native language instruction. I thought it should be the other way around—one and a half hours of second language instruction. I decided we needed to change direction.

Importance of Bilingual Education

Native language instruction is critical. Anyone that is familiar with the research will tell you that the fastest way to get children into a second language is if they know their first language well. You only learn to read and write once—after that, everything else is a transfer. If that is the case you have to make sure you do an excellent job of teaching them to read and write well first, because if that is not in place, then they will not have anything solid to transfer into the second language. Much of bilingual education is based on the premise of transfer. That's not to say that once you move into English you drop the Spanish—on the contrary. Children need to continue in their native language because that is where higher-level thinking skills are developed. Once children know how to sequence, how to infer, how to predict, and how to summarize, it will be easy to do it in English. But they have to know it well in their native language first.

So, when I became principal and they were teaching math in English to Spanish monolingual students, I said, "That's ridiculous!" We're wasting precious time!" You see, I believe that we should be learning while learn-

You only learn to read and write once—after that, everything else is a transfer.

ing English, not learning English at the expense o' learning!

When a principal has such deep-seeded beliefs, it is easy to get a good bilingual program in place. I believe that children should have a very strong native language base. Without it, kids will fail, or be placed in special education, and eventually will drop out. I do not want that. Our children are too smart, and our teachers work too hard, to get those kinds of results.

I believe that we should be learning while learning English, not learning English at the expense of learning!... I believe that children should have a very strong native language base. Without it, kids will fail, or be placed in special education, and eventually will drop out.

Moving Toward the Goal

As for changes I made, I met with our bilingual staff and we talked about it. The good thing about John Alexander at that time was that there were bilingual teachers that believed native language instruction was very important, so I had no trouble convincing them. I had some others that were not so sure. Sometimes we had "knock-down, drag-out, lay-it-out-on-the-table" discussions, especially with one of my teachers who was working on her doctorate. I knew if she was convinced, then the others would come in line, so I spent a lot of time with her. I would take out my research articles by Cummins and Krashen and we would knock heads. She believed the research. But I pointed out to her that even though she "spoke" research, that was not what she was implementing. We were doing two very different things. We believed one thing but were actually doing something totally different. So, we figured out how we were going to align theory and practice. She wrote the whole curriculum for native language instruction, and became my greatest supporter and defender of bilingual education from then on.

We developed Spanish native language skills as well as ESL skill goals for first and second grades so everyone had something to shoot for—a developmentally appropriate bilingual program for our kids.

Next came grade level skills. It is a continuum. We developed Spanish native language skills as well as ESL skill goals for first and second grades so everyone had something to shoot for—a developmentally appropriate bilingual program for our kids.

The district, though, had the policy that even though our children were given native language instruction, they were to be tested in English. I believed that policy was way off, so I asked the Language Proficiency Action Committee (LPAC) to come to the rescue. LPAC has an incredible amount of power, depending on how you use it and if you want to use it for the benefit of the child. LPAC can override anything that is district policy, or anything that is state policy, if it is in the best interest of the child. Using it as our force for change, we were able to do a great deal of things other schools would not do, could not do, or were afraid to touch.

School Implementation Plan

The first thing we did was write it into our school improvement plan that we were going to be doing true bilingual education. We were going to do native language development and test in the native language. We were not going to test our kids at the end of second grade in English. So, we purchased the SABE test and, sure enough, our kids were doing well! Of course they are going to do poorly if they are tested in English after native language instruction. We knew we were on the right track, but we had to improve ourselves.

Teachers went to a great deal of teacher training and they themselves provided training for the district.

What we did was infuse the skills. Even though we were very good at whole language, there was still a big gap in terms of the children's skills. Some of our kids didn't have an inkling about decoding. They didn't know how to attack words and were relying strictly on sight. Because Spanish is very phonetic, it is almost a crime not to teach some basic decoding skills. Within our elaborate thematic units we went to our continuum skills and made sure decoding was taught. We make sure we teach *vocales, consonantes, las silabas;* we go into *diptongos,* we go into *acento escrito,* and all the various elements that make up the Spanish language. That is not to say we do not teach English. We do a great deal of English language development in every thematic unit.

School Makeup

We have different language backgrounds. We have regular, all-English classes, where the home language survey indicates English is spoken exclusively. If children speak English and Spanish, we test to determine whether they need to be placed in a bilingual program or not. We have two bilingual kindergarten classrooms, three regular, and one ESL. We have three bilingual first-grade classrooms, two regular, and one ESL. We have two bilingual second-grade classrooms, three regular, and one ESL. And, we have two bilingual third-grade classrooms, three regular, and one ESL.

Some say our kids are not achieving because they are LEP students. But I refuse to accept that notion. We found here at John Alexander that our children who had gone through our developmentally appropriate bilingual education program were outscoring regular kids in third grade. How can this be? Well let me tell you, with a solid base in their native language, who knows, they can do anything!

On Isolating Bilingual Education Classes

Bilingual education is part of our instructional program. That was a concern when the superintendent created Supplementary Instructional Services and bilingual education was in there. A letter of protest came out of this building and it was signed even by my regular teachers. We all agree bilingual education is not supplementary instruction; it is hard-core instruction and that is where it belongs.

Bucking the System

I do not agree with the approach that the district and state are promoting. In fact, I am trying to get them in line with me! I don't believe the bilingual immersion model, what is being implemented now, is good for kids. And, I am the first one out there to say that. I find myself in the role of the advocate for the child who is Spanish dominant, and I will take anybody on. I am dissatisfied with our children, and I do not think many others are saying that. If people do not believe in bilingual education, well, they should get out of the way! Our mission is to succeed. Our numbers are increasing every year and we cannot continue to have this horrendous problem of dropout. Some say our kids are not achieving because they are LEP students. But I refuse to accept that notion. We found here at John Alexander that our children who had gone through our developmentally appropriate bilingual education program were out-scoring regular kids in third grade. How can this be? Well let me tell you, with a solid base in their native language, who knows, they can do anything!

Reasons for Resistance from Other Leaders

I think it is ignorance. People just do not understand bilingual education. It is really hard to understand unless you have been there yourself. I am not saying you have to be a bilingual teacher in order to be a good principal and have a strong

When we have people who are undermining bilingual education or who say they have a program but allow their teachers to do native language instruction only once a week, one and a half hours per day, I wonder, where is the accountability?

bilingual education background, but you know, it sure helps. I have always been a teacher rebel, but now I am on the other side, and I realize I can make or break programs; I can make or break teachers and kids. It is an awesome responsibility!

When we have people who are undermining bilingual education or who say they have a program but allow their teachers to do native language instruction only once a week, one and a half hours per day, I wonder, where is the accountability? I have even heard that some principals say, "Just keep the Spanish materials out, honey, but what these kids really need is English and that's what you are going to teach. If anyone comes to monitor you, just have the Spanish materials out to show that's what you have been using." I wonder who is holding these people responsible.

These same people will say that the reason their scores are coming down is because they have all the LEP children—LEP kids that are continually given English. This goes back to the premise I stated earlier to you, that if children do not have a solid native language base, they will not do well in English. Kids are learning English at the expense of learning, and that is what many people do not seem to understand!

People who do those things do not understand bilingual education—the nuts and bolts of how bilingual education works—and it is unfortunate for the teachers who have to comply with what the principal wants. Sometimes principals are swayed and led down the wrong path by people who do not believe in bilingual education. What irks me is that some teachers have gotten their master's degrees in bilingual education but they are undermining the kids left and right. I think they should be required to pay back every cent that they got in Title VII scholarship.

What Needs to Be Done

Lots of training. First, start out with the principal in the school. Principals should not be trained with teachers. The principal has to have that information first before the teachers get it, because it is a terrible situation to be in when your instructional leader is sitting there learning the same thing you are. That is embarrassing! You preserve the dignity of the principal and maintain the line of leadership if you train the principal separately.

Second, bring in outside resources like from universities

But, I think a lot of the problem is lack of information. I go back to my invaluable experience of being a bilingual teacher.

or other institutions which offer training. You must bring in people who will do massive inservice, because teachers and administrators have to see the need. I get angry when I hear people say we have got to have bilingual education because it is the law. I say, "Wait a minute. The law was there because of the need of the children. You should do it because of the need for the children, not because it's the law." Unfortunately some educators try to circumvent it. But, I think a lot of the problem is lack of information. I go back to my invaluable experience of being a bilingual teacher.

Performance of State Agency

State officials have never taken leadership roles, because if they had, they would of never allowed this bilingual immersion mode to have existed here. What it is, is political. It depends on who knows who at TEA and then they can get away with waivers and all those things that are hurting our kids. They put the damper on the smaller districts who do not have the political tie. Yet, the big districts...I was amazed! I was

amazed that they would let Dallas off the hook with the kind of things they did.

Accountability Needed

The way we are supposedly going to maximize service to LEP kids since the district does not have enough bilingual education teachers is that the teachers are going to do shared teaching—an ESL and bilingual teacher will be paired. Spanish language arts will be taught, 90 minutes in kinder and first grade, 60 minutes in second grade, and 30 minutes in third grade. TEA screamed when they monitored, so now there is 60 minutes in third grade.

However, there is a little disclaimer somewhere that states the amount of native language instruction may be increased depending on the needs of the students at the campus. Don't you love it? It's left to the discretion of the principal or the people implementing the program, which I think is crazy. How can you put accountability in?

Dangerous Moves

It amazes me that these are people with degrees—that people get paid a salary for making these decisions. You are giving people a license to do away with bilingual education. I think it is horrible.

In south Texas I worked with the La Jolla ISD, and I know how difficult it is for those kids to learn English because of the ambiance. It was inundated with Spanish. So there, we did have to take drastic measures for our kids to learn English, but not at the expense of the Spanish language.

Here in Dallas, in the urban area, these kids are going to learn English because they are inundated with it. Sure you have the *novelas* but that just goes on until the kid gets MTV. Then, forget it! Honey, they are into English from then on. I just think it is a reality we need to deal with.

But back to the original point about giving people license to do whatever they want—English only, ESL, or you don't really have to do bilingual education—that is my interpretation of it! I think people like that should be hung up to dry!

You need to be a visionary, but you have got to be sure the people buy into your vision...You work on it, you fix it, so that they will buy into whatever it is you have in your mind. Then, it is collaborative and everyone has ownership. But you have to guide it and set it up to what you want without people realizing it. That's the bottom line.

Principal Is Visionary, Organizer, or Authority?

I think it is all of them. You need to be a visionary, but you have got to be sure the people buy into your vision. Isn't that awful? You work on it, you fix it, so that they will buy into whatever it is you have in your mind. Then, it is collaborative and everyone has ownership. But you have to guide it and set it up to what you want without people realizing it. That's the bottom line. Because, when they realize they have been manipulated, they get ticked off. So what we did here at John Alexander was decide that the need is to improve student achievement. Only 20 percent of the kids were above the 50th percentile—20 percent!

I would say to the teachers, "I don't know about you, but I believe our kids are a lot smarter than this. I see you working so hard; something is not right. Let's see what we can do to work smarter and not harder." I would ask, "How can I help you do it better? I will run interference, I'll be the buffer for you to plan and deliver effectively." Collaboration, you bet. That's critical.

Everyone has to be thinking alike and moving in the same direction. We had another "knock-down-drag out" over our thematic units. It was easier to get rid of communism in Russia than to get teachers to give up the elaborate thematic units they had worked so hard on! But dinosaurs in kinder, first, second, third, and fourth? Forget it. Give me something higher level—fossils, geography, paleontology.

I set the mode, the ground rules. I guess I am, in a sense, dictatorial, but otherwise we get nowhere. So, you see, the princi-

Another problem is that we just have a great deal of people in positions of authority, positions of power, who do not have the kids first and foremost in their minds. They get all caught up in the politics of things—surviving in their jobs, becoming power hungry. "I want this program and that program under my domain." That is what runs them instead of what kids need.

pal is required to use all the leadership styles. But, you have to know when to use which hat.

Sometimes I use the approach, "Well, try this angle if you like, it won't hurt my feelings if you don't. Maybe it's better, it's easier." So with a low affective filter, as Krashen calls it, we can battle it out.

In cases where teachers are unwilling to change, I have developed tolerance. I go in and assess. If the "ends justify the means," then it is OK. I may be a little more tolerant. But if the ends do not justify the means, it is time to do some head knocking and get it straight. I suggest that maybe the teacher would be happier somewhere else. I say, "I know your major, talk to me about your minor so we can get you into someplace where you'll be more effective."

But I am lucky. I have two people like this but I see a deep sense of care for our kids in them. They work in a very humanistic way. Of course, that may be because when I first got here I told them that if I ever saw them scolding our kids, they were going to have to answer to me. I am a parent too, and I do not want my kids treated that way. The fact that I bring my children to this school I think carries a lot of weight. It makes it a credible place.

What Inservice Training is Needed

Good quality inservice from people who know what they are doing—not just the theory but the practice. My teachers do not want to waste their time. It is an insult. Therefore, you need to differentiate in terms of levels of staff development needs: refinement, advanced work, or rehash and review.

I try to attend most of the staff development right along with my teachers because I want to know what they are getting. If it is boring, I will tell the people, "You just wasted my people's and my time." My teachers know I will stand up for them. Or, they will say, "You have to go to this session. It was excellent! I think we can do this and this!" And I will come back and say, "You're absolutely right. Now, how do we go about doing this?" And they'll take the ball and run. For example, we had an assertive discipline workshop. Twenty-five people gave up their Saturday to attend. All I heard was, "How wonderful!"

Keeping Lines of Communication Open

We have mentor teachers or a buddy system. We pair up to observe in a non-threatening way. I release some of the teachers for those observations. Even then, though, I have teachers that are not receptive. They do not know what is supposed to be going on in their classrooms. I have to put my foot down and say, "You are going to observe this classroom to help get a picture of what I want you to be doing." Because then, we have something we can shoot for.

But you know, if the need for change is not within that person, it is not going to happen. I have to convince some of these 20-year veterans they need to change. I try and be as lighthearted as possible in a supportive way. But sometimes I do have to put on the "old witch" role. I can do that too! I don't like it, but I will do it.

Changes and Improvements

If I could change anything, I would want to preserve the child's self-concept, because if there is a positive self-concept, he or she becomes a risk-taker. Risk-takers are going to be trying new things. But somehow we have institutionalized our schooling to the point where you can already see by third grade which kid has no self-concept, which one is demoralized, and which one is great and can take on the world. That is one thing.

The other thing I would do is get rid of all the teachers that do not like kids. I wish we could change our assessment of teachers. This TTAS is for the birds! It tells you what a dog and pony show should look like, but that is not the problem. It is the "day in, day out" that is critical. Right now, the Board comes down on us because we have so many teachers scoring so high and yet the kids are not achieving, and they think we are the bad guys.

Need for a Change of Heart

Another problem is that we just have a great deal of people in positions of authority, positions of power, who do not have the kids first and foremost in their minds. They get all caught up in the politics of things—surviving in their jobs, becoming power hungry. "I want this program and that program under my domain." That is what runs them instead of what kids need. They start playing those horrible games and totally lose sight of what we are about.

That is why I love being a principal. I am out here on the front line. It is really hard for them to come in and tell us to change when we are the ones who know what is really going on. And I love site-based management, because now we have the license to do what we felt needed to be done all along. To think you can use different groups to the kids' advantage! I think it is wonderful.

The challenge is balancing it all—being the collaborator, the bad guy; the friend, the humanist; the big baton.

I haven't talked about parenting and their important roles in all this but we have an "open door" policy. When parents come with a complaint, we listen to them, and give them our total attention. We tell them we are going to fix it, and by golly, that teacher calls them that very afternoon. This way, you get a lot of mileage when you need it.

My front staff is wonderful at that. If someone walks in they know, they drop everything and go attend to that person. They are our customers, and we do not make them wait.

Learning Balance

The challenge is balancing it all—being the collaborator; the bad guy; the friend; the humanist; the big baton. You have to keep a certain momentum going. When you are depressed, you should really stay home because it runs through the building so quickly! *Te pones la cara de cuqueta.* You do what you need to do and carry on—you always have to be up for your staff. Let them see that you are smiling and "good morning" them to death. If you do it consistently, it runs through the building. I want to make our buildings a place where people want to come to work. We work really hard at that.

Tomorrow I'm treating the staff to fajitas. It is a *cinco de mayo* and it is also Teacher Appreciation Week.

Do You Have a Question or a Comment?

Call our toll-free number,
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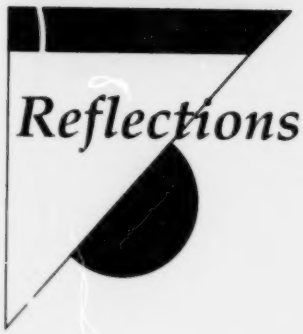
You may remain anonymous.



Ms. Escamilla's tireless pursuit of educational equity for second-language learners is well-rooted in her theoretical understandings of bilingual education, and in her wealth of experiences as a teacher and administrator. She is an advocate with a life-long mission, well-informed of the educational system at the district and state levels. As a principal, Ms. Escamilla combines her confidence, know-how and experience to create a role that is multi-functional. However, her visionary skills are most prominent as evidenced in her intense commitment to overcome any obstacles that stand in the way of meeting the academic achievement goals of her students.

She acknowledges the struggles and the setbacks in achieving the goals of academic success: "The questions we were asking back then were, 'Do we need bilingual education. What about materials? Why do we need bilingual education?' And today, twenty-two years later, we're still asking the same questions." Her vision for change is clear. Realizing that vision may appear to be impossible for some, but for Ms. Escamilla it is attainable in her school and others.

There are many lessons we can learn from Ms. Escamilla. Among these are:

- Many changes are needed in the system; however, there are ways to "beat" the system and persistence may pay off.
- Principals and teachers need to be WELL-INFORMED of the research in bilingual education, and know how to implement it.
- Teachers must have ownership in the educational programs and principals must facilitate that process.
- Teachers and principals must establish reliance and trust, so that teachers know that their principal is behind them, and vice-versa.
- Principals play key roles in providing educational equity to under-represented students; an accountability system should address the effectiveness of principals in that process.
- Principals have the prerogative of establishing ground rules and determining what is negotiable and what is not in designing and implementing change; however, the effectiveness of this process depends on the principals' being well-informed and experienced in bilingual education.

Ms. Escamilla's actions support her solid commitment and dedication to her school. The prevailing message in her interview is clear: principals have, above all, a professional responsibility to become well-informed, and to take the necessary steps to ensure that the best kinds of programs are implemented.

Empowerment is the Key: A Principal's Conviction

Mr. Rogelio Gonzalez has served a total of twenty years as a teacher and administrator, and is principal of Wayside High School*. With seven years as assistant principal, and seven years as principal, he has accrued a great deal of experience as a leader. He believes more strongly than ever that the answer to the educational challenge rests with teachers, and he advocates empowering them at every opportunity. Following is a summary of an interview conducted by Dr. Guadarrama with Mr. Gonzalez.*

** Name has been changed.*

The School and the Community

Wayside High School is comprised of 1,600 students, 75 percent of which are Hispanic. Of this group, 30 to 40 percent are either in some LEP category or in our preliterate program. Other ethnic varieties, representing 19 different countries, include 12 percent Asian, Vietnamese, Amerasian, Cambodian, and Laotians. But, the most frequent language spoken is Spanish.

The socio-economic status is "nothing," to "almost something." There are no white-collar parents, but most support a middle class, modest but proud, existence. Some families require assistance, and there are some that don't know how to use the system. We try to work with them in that respect.

Many of our students are illegal, most of whom are Hispanic. This is a sad reality, because some of our top, top, top, graduates are illegal and don't quality for further assistance. But they "make do," and usually take the junior college route. They are too good to be suppressed. As an example, our valedictorian was the top candidate for the Dallas Morning News scholarship; he was named "GTE All American" out of 6,000 students. He was chosen for a FINA scholarship. But all these organizations require non-immigrant status. He is from Guatemala. A kid like this is going to shine no matter what.

Besides, we think it's kind of neat to have a Cambodian quarterback throwing the ball to a Laotian wide receiver blocked by a Mexican. Every facet of our program starts from the beginning because our students don't have a frame of reference.

This bright young mind is going to take a little longer to surface, but he will surface.

This is another example of life in the "naked city" that we are going to have to address. The old paradigm of everybody being a citizen may stand now; however, we have a large immigrant population that may not be legal but it is here! So we're either going to have to do something about it or continue to ignore it. I don't think we can ignore it anymore because these immigrants are part of our society.

Wayside is a comprehensive high school. By that I mean we offer every facet of Texas high school life that our native-speaking counterpart has. We want to continue to do that because it is part of Texana—it's part of Americana, and as our students begin to assimilate they can say in college, "Oh yeah, I bought an annual, I took part in the band, the choir, or the football team." Also, when their kids come home mentioning stuff about high school life they can identify with them. It is a conviction we have that many people may not understand, but we didn't want to become a magnet for LEP students.

Besides, we think it's kind of neat to have a Cambodian quarterback throwing the ball to a Laotian wide receiver blocked by a Mexican. Every facet of our program starts from the beginning because our students don't have a frame of reference. We like to think that we do more with this unique population than

I want teachers to understand these kids are not dumb, but that they need to be presented with the material in a different way. So this is what we are all about.

anyone. We have to teach ESL. We believe in our ESL methodology.

When ESL is the School

Consequently, we have the most dynamic, aggressive ESL department which is the largest in the state. We have 24 teachers and will probably have 27 next year, depending on the LEP population. We work stringently to train our regular subject-area teachers in ESL methodology because the regular program no longer exists in this school. This school is an ESL program. The core teachers in regular education are the minority. But they are important because once students exit ESL we have to provide a base for landing in the regular core. Students must be hit with a consistent delivery system ninth grade through twelfth grade.

A New Way of Teaching

In visiting classes and looking at test results we found that although Juan exited ESL in good standing, in regular core he failed. We didn't know why. We identified a cognitive lag in students between exiting ESL with its nurturing environment and entering the regular classroom with the old paradigm of teaching. So, we decided on a consistent address and delivery system of objectives. Our ESL department works very aggressively with the regular core teachers at their request. It is a challenge to convince veteran teachers that they need to look at a new way of teaching.

Making Adjustments

Math, for instance, taught the old way—assignment: division. Do the odd problems. The students do not do the homework, so for punishment they are given the even problems too. That is twice as many. They needed a different delivery system—more hands-on, whole language, discovery learning. We weren't doing that. The teacher would say, "Just read the text, do the questions." Read and do questions. We had to break those habits. We wanted them to touch the stuff. For example, if you teach measurement using liters, go get a three liter bottle of Pepsi and show them three liters.

We found out the reason our students were failing history was because history in ESL started at 1865 and went to the present. No background was ever provided prior to 1865. That was no problem, we fixed that. But when students exit ESL, the language problem is still there. For example in U.S. History, there are the words "flower," "compact," and "May." "Flower" could be a rose or what you use to make tortillas. "Compact" could be something small, tightly interwoven or the thing your mom uses with powder. "May" could be something you use to ask permission or cinco de mayo. But what the heck is a Mayflower Compact?

The sophistication of applying the vocabulary they've learned and synthesizing higher-level skills was not quite there yet because they just learned English a year ago. The concept of osmosis is another example. The biology teacher was wearing himself out using "sheltered biology" but the kids weren't responding. I asked him, "How do you feel? He said, "Man, I know they're not getting anything. I don't know what I am not doing!"

We started working again and that's where we realized the cognitive lag was developing. They didn't have *osmosis* as a word in ESL, or *chromosomes* and all that stuff. So now our program is designed so it has ESL for science, ESL for history—a little bit of background so when they get into core work, they will be prepared. This will prepare them, plus the key is the consistent delivery system. I want teachers to understand these kids are not dumb, but that they need to be presented with the material in a different way. So this is what we are all about.

Staff Selection

The veterans are harder to convince but the new people we are hiring, no matter for what class, we ask them, "Are you ready for this?" They come and observe. It is a test to find out how excited they are about joining our staff. I firmly believe you have to want to teach at Wayside High School, and not just a high school in Dallas.

As we add new people, we have a tier system. Prospective

teachers interview with me, the Dean, the ESL department head, and the head of their specialty. Then, we ask them to come back and visit, walk around, look at the classes, and see the challenge.

We have seen a difference in selecting teachers after they observe. They say, "Hey, I want to go to the next step." They do demonstration lessons using their own classes. If they're at another school and want to transfer, we visit the class of their choice. We send three people, and use a simple instrument to see if they are teaching. They come back, we debrief and it's either "three-up unanimous," or we don't select the person. That has yielded a better product, plus we've involved our present staff. As a result, the new person already has three pals, plus the three that selected him. And, his buddies try to make sure "their brother" is going to be good.

Better Products

This process is based on my belief that I'm not smart enough to select teachers by myself. We ensure success that way. The products of this system are bright, spirited, energetic and happy to be here. We don't tell them they are chosen. We offer them a position and they choose to join us. You have to teach where you want to be. That scares the hell out of downtown because I believe in letting the people choose where they want to go. They say, "You can't do that!" And I say, "Why not? If I feel good about the program at Wayside High School, I should be able to sell it to anyone."

We use this system because it yields a better product. It empowers the staff. I want the staff to feel, *Que se avientan!* When they go to a staff development session, other people say, "That's Wayside. I want to be a part of that team." Whereas before, we weren't seen that way. This is where you went when you couldn't go anywhere else. We worked real hard to change the self-image of our staff. First, I gave notice downtown: *"Ya, es todo!* No more dumping coaches here, no more dumping teachers here. I am here to serve notice to the athletic and personnel departments, we are no longer a dumping ground." Now, we believe we can pick and choose. It's an attitude.

These kids are older. They are 18, 19 years old. We want to help them assimilate into the community because we realized they wouldn't be with us long. That's a reality, not an admission of defeat. They want to learn English to get work and not rely on some sort of subsidy. That was our hope.

Pre-Literate Program

Four years ago Level One teachers told me their 15:1 ratio level cap was overflowing. A new phenomenon was occurring—students lower than Level One were coming in. I asked, "What can we do?" They said, "Create a new pre-literate program." And we did it.

My only problem in implementing this program has been getting out of their way fast enough. The teachers say they need something. And I say, "Well, can you design it?" They say, "Yes." So we do it. For example, we looked at the teacher-to-pupil ratio and allocation of staff members. We made changes, all within our budget and with permission.

Purposes of Program

There were two purposes: These kids are older. They are 18, 19 years old. We want to help them assimilate into the community because we realized they wouldn't be with us long. That's a reality, not an admission of defeat. They want to learn English to get work and not rely on some sort of subsidy. That was our hope.

The other purpose is to give them as much as we can, and maybe we can hook those that are younger into staying and finishing high school.

Deciding the Next Step

Because they are in ESL levels, the students move up based on LPAC, the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee, comprised of teachers and counselors. We recognize traditional high school is four years, but we have no problem with a five-year program. So we say let us initially elongate the program by design so they finish—even if it takes five years.

The stars to which we hitch our wagons are the teachers—not the gurus of effective leadership.

At the end of five years, we'll have a better product in terms of language acquisition and they may have greater success on the TAAS. LPAC identifies the students that are acquiring language faster so we do not slow down those that are sharp.

Why Change is Difficult

I don't know why some [administrators] don't change, but I say one of the things that might be restricting them is the energy requirement. It's more work to change than to stay with the norm. I am probably as guilty of that as the next person. If an idea makes sense though, I see myself as a broker. I am not going to build it. I'll help get the materials to build it and support it but I'm not going to build it. The people that are going to work with it will build it. Something that is scary is the bureaucracy. I'm a chicken, but I know if we have the support of a number of teachers, no one is going to contest it. The stars to which we hitch our wagons are the teachers—not the gurus of effective leadership.

I say, let's give these people the reigns. I'll block and I'll guide for them and we'll see. I am here to help the teacher; I am a facilitator, supporter and organizer, and a strength in this context. I don't have a problem saying I am not strong enough to make a decision that is going to impact 100 teachers, but if we all make the decisions, we'll share the wealth or we share the blame and go back and redo it. I think it breeds a good climate. Empowerment. My ego can take all that because the end result is success and everybody wins. But again, that is work.

Early Influences

At the entry level of my internship, I was very fortunate to have an administrator who was very strong, autocratic, and oriented toward providing the best possible working environment for the teachers. All he asked them to do was to plan and to teach. It was totally different from what I'd been exposed to before. I realized it was a neat environment; he protected them. He was their dad. But, even as dogmatic and strong as he was, he would surprise me by trying something good he would see in my work. I saw it was OK to give in.

In employee relations types of conferences I would think, "All right, we're going to kick some tail in here!" because the person deserved it. But here was this strong man who had this person in the palm of his hand. The person would defend and he would counter with concession. I was taken aback! I wanted him to go for the throat. And yet, he didn't!

He never explained why—I wish he had—but I found out on my own later. He didn't lose anything; as a matter of fact, he gained more strength for his case because he gave in on one aspect. I thought that was pretty smart.

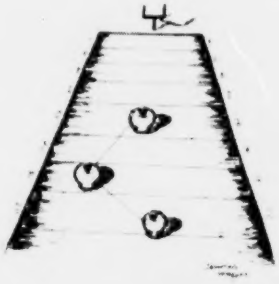
Then, the next person I worked with was innovative. He always allowed me to do what I wanted. I think he knew I never do anything without a safety net.

That is, when I have a new policy I have support and a solid background so it's not really daring. For example, we challenged the design of the ESL program and the person who designed it. It was hard to say, "Your baby is not working. We want to do this." But we had the background, statistics, and teacher support. We were approved. I don't do this by myself. I don't know as much as those ESL teachers or chemistry teachers know about their subjects or how to best get it across.

We advocate stepping outside the lines. This creates an atmosphere conducive to innovations. For example, if the teacher wants to use the football field as a pool table and use the students as the balls in order to learn angles, I have no problem with that. We can try it; no one is going to get hurt.

Relationship with Peers

I ask a lot of questions and I give a lot of feedback. I found out a long time ago that it keeps you awake. I challenge. They may see me as a trouble maker—someone who prolongs meetings. But, the people who just want to get out of the meeting are the same ones sitting in the



We advocate stepping outside the lines.

parking lot wondering, "When is this due?" "Now, what do we have to do?" "Why do we have to do this?" I have seen it too many times. I don't allow myself to do that. If I have a question, I ask it. I talk too much. I don't know what they think; it would be interesting to find out. I just find it interesting to see what the dynamics are within a given area—whether people describe you as possessing leadership or as a loose cannon. "If you're leading, turn around and see if anybody is following." I'm selected as a representative of the area to the superintendent. I don't know if they selected me because I shoot my mouth off or what. In fulfilling that task though, I feel very accountable to them. I am very timely in my reports to them. I think they know if they want me to take a task to the mountain, I'll do it. I hope they see me as someone they would take in a dark alley or a foxhole with them. That is what I hope my teachers feel.

On Assessing for Improvement

Obviously, we had the normal stuff—TAAS or TEAMS. We looked at different skills—the ACP and TAP scores. We didn't need any more scores telling us we were no good. We had a wonderful group of adopting partners from the corporate community that were willing to come in and do training. We went through the Dupont training on consensus building. We worked with Region X to identify areas that needed to be addressed: test preparation, student attendance, parent involvement, core letters. We addressed building maintenance and student morale. Three years ago, we asked the teachers to identify what they believed our needs were. For our Southern Association evaluation they had to sign up or were asked to be a part of a committee. Corporate board came in to train these groups. One teacher said, "I can't believe Mr. Gonzalez is willing to cut himself open and let the community see our problems." I thought that was somewhat amusing because I thought we were a part of the community so they should know what we need.

That was the process that began our movement toward total empowerment. The results the teachers and community wanted, we provided. They wanted an advisory time with the same group of kids every day to look at grades and attendance. So, they built a bell schedule and I modified it between bus schedules. Also, teachers did not want to break what they were doing in terms of academics to "blitz for TAAS."

One committee applied the old curriculum to a new constituency, the emerging immigrant population. That is where this thing about delivery system started coming out: Why are we still teaching the old way when we have a new customer?

One committee applied the old curriculum to a new constituency, the emerging immigrant population. That is where this thing about delivery system started coming out: Why are we still teaching the old way when we have a new customer? For the most part, we have continued with the recommendations from those committees. The committees presented to other committees, then we boiled it down to four committees the next year: student attendance, parent involvement, building maintenance, and delivery system/test preparation.

Coordinating with Feeder School

At least 600 of our students come in with no skills. They are not from our feeder system. We cannot say that they are. However, we have gotten together with our feeder junior high to produce Wayside graduates. I fight for them as well as I do for Wayside. We do staff developments on Saturdays. Now teachers from the junior high can look our Wayside teachers in the eye and say, "My kids are prepared for you because you told me what you wanted." I want that teacher's integrity to be challenged: "Man, you have to be prepared. You are going into Gonzalez' class next year, and he is good. I don't want him to think less of me for not teaching you this."

So, we started a process of accountability this year for those that do go through the feeder system. We are trying to make sure teachers know each other, because if I am going to blame you for not preparing this child, I

The teachers here at Wayside used to believe that they were nothing, so in turn the kids believed that they were nothing too.

ought to be able to tell you face to face. "You are not addressing subjunctive case and that's on the TAAS. You have to help me prepare them for that." I want to create an atmosphere where teachers can peer coach and say, "I'm next door to you and you didn't do so well on that poetry chapter." And then the other teacher would answer, "No, I didn't. Can you help me on it?"

Again, the teachers are the stars we have to hitch our wagon to. When I tell them they're no good it becomes a punitive, then adversarial situation. But when a peer tells them, or you tell a peer you need help, that is not threatening. It will take a lot of "ego purifying," but we are headed that way.

Developing Confidence

The teachers here at Wayside used to believe that they were nothing, so in turn the kids believed that they were nothing too. I did things here you are not supposed to be able to do with students: I changed the dress code, I confronted the gangs, I set up reward systems for snitching on graffiti artists, and I called them "doe-does." But you should not be able to do this with a student body unless the student body feels it is nothing. The students should have challenged me but they didn't. Now, they believe the reality. They are somebody and they can compete with anyone. It bothered me a lot that the teachers were contributing to the problem. They would say, "These kids can't." I would say, "What do you mean they can't? How do you know? Have you tried? Have you asked them?" Again, this is nothing new. People who change things do that.

Encouraging Results

An example of how things changed is our science fair. In my first year, teachers asked me if I knew anyone who could judge. But I wanted to make sure the projects were good first. They were terrible! The fair was so small that all the projects fit in one classroom. My daughter's second grade class had more sophisticated projects, and they were better displayed, than these high schooler's projects. So, I met with the science department and told them I was embarrassed. I gave them suggestions for increasing the number and quality of the entries and told them to plan on having the science fair in the library next year. The next year, before going in to see the fair, I crossed my fingers. I closed my eyes. I was saying, "science fair, science fair, science fair." It was beyond my wildest dreams! The library was packed with experiments! The next year we standardized the look. The first year was quantity, but the second year was quality.

We showed them how to use foam board. We added new department members—products of the system. They came in fired up, ready to go. They'd say, "What do you mean, they don't do science fair projects?" In terms of the LEP students, they teamed up into triads. That wasn't a problem. We sold them the foam board to get ownership established. It was the neatest thing to watch them walk home with their foam board. I said to the science teachers, "See, they can do it!"

Another thing I believe in is showing off. I told the science department that I wasn't taking anyone to the science wing because the kids are reading and answering questions in the back of the book. I didn't smell anything. In a good science department, *todo el tiempo está el olor de algo.* I asked, "Why don't you dissect? What happened to the frog, the earthworm, and the crayfish?" They would say, "We're afraid they'll stab themselves with the probes." I said, "What? Stab themselves with probes? They carry weapons a

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whole lot worse than this! This is the same kid we give a scalpel to in art class and he is doing wonderful projects." So we began an accountability system for dissection materials in which teachers were responsible for usage and wear rather than shelf rot. Now we have something going on in there all the time. We added new blood because the old blood *estaba media cansada.*

Campus Communications

We have a forum for teachers to express their frustrations, called the Family Advisory Committee, which is completely anonymous. The ones who trust me come in here, close the door, and blow off steam. Then, they go right back to what they need to do. I know some are not comfortable with my style, but they work with the kids, do their jobs, so we are OK.

After I realized teachers were going to need to change with site-based management, I met with every department. I laid down the old paradigm and told them we were going to be needing a lot more energy from teachers in terms of student involvement, direct teaching, and activities. If they were not interested, the district was large enough to assimilate their styles somewhere else. I would help with no hard feelings. But if they wanted to be a part, great. I wanted to use peer coaching. I wanted the department heads to take care of their own.

The science department said, "We don't want Mr. So-and-so." I asked, "Did you tell him? Why do you want me to tell him?" They'd say, "You're the principal." I said, "Wait a minute, I like the guy. I know he is not a good teacher, but I like him. Why do you want me to be the bad guy? I didn't become a principal to be a bad guy." They asked, "What do we do?" I told them, "I don't know, you tell me what you want to do." They decided to talk to the teacher. I set it up, bought food, and stayed after school with them and had a departmental meeting first. They told the guy he wasn't carrying his load and they did not appreciate it. I debriefed with the him and told him that unless he improved, the other teachers did not want him to stay. He improved, but I don't know if he could ever mend what he had already done. Through this experience, the department realized they had the power to change direction.

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In sharing money, negotiations had to be done. I had to give everyone the same amount. They had to get together and ask for more or leftover money from either the English teachers or ESL people. We met. They wanted me to control. I didn't want to. But the whole thing worked out so beautifully.

I believe what works in elementary school works in ESL classrooms. Have everything print rich, and do the TPR methodology. It's an attitude—you cannot tell someone how to be great, they just are.

Guiding Principles

I don't have a style, just a gut feeling. I try to treat people how I want to be treated. Teaching is tough today. My wife is a barometer for me. I hear of unhappiness in other places and I want to be a nice guy. We empowered our teachers to be able to ask for help and to cooperate.

Do You Have a Question or a Comment?

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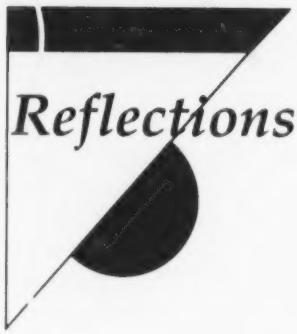
You may remain anonymous.



In our latest conversation with Mr. Gonzalez, he conveyed his reservations about his interview being included in the Discovering Our Experiences publication since his school had recently been categorized as "low-performing" by the State Accountability Office. Our response was, "on the contrary, we want our readers to know the situation at your school to help them understand the problems, the obstacles and the dilemmas that you and your staff face each day, and how hard you've worked to create a school that is responsive to the needs of your students." In our view, the accountability system failed for Mr. Gonzalez, his staff and students, not the other way around.

If ever there was a near perfect match between a leader and a school, one could argue that such a match exists in Mr. Gonzalez and Wayside High School. His incredible zeal for change is especially noteworthy. A fearless leader, a master of creating school culture, a persuasive and careful negotiator, are a few descriptions that embody the leadership style of Mr. Gonzalez. A strong and relentless advocate for his staff and students, Mr. Gonzalez has been responsible for maintaining high expectations for students, high teaching standards for teachers, and a reputation for making his school a "special place" where only the dedicated and committed are invited and challenged to do their best job possible. The work which Mr. Gonzalez and his staff have undertaken to improve their educational program for their students demonstrates their solid commitment to their profession. Some of these activities include:

- Promoting ESL strategies and activities in all of their content area courses.
- Adding a fifth year to their program to accommodate the needs of their pre-literate students.
- Working with the feeder middle school to help improve the transitioning process for students.
- Working with the community to increase their involvement in the education of the students.
- Presenting a forum for teacher self-expression called the Family Advisory Committee.

Mr. Gonzalez is especially successful in his role as a public relations agent. He has also worked hard to nurture leadership skills among his teaching staff. He values teachers' contributions, and supports them professionally and morally. The value he places on teacher empowerment is essential to the success of the educational programs at Wayside High.

Leading at the State Level:
An Interview with Dr. Roberto Zamora

Dr. Roberto Zamora has been Executive Assistant to the Commissioner of the Texas Education Agency since 1992. He has many assignments, including overseeing school funding, technology, and internal operations. His other assignments involve working closely with other people in the agency who have responsibility in areas related to programs, instruction, and accountability. Zamora says the position is challenging in that what he does at the state level impacts every district in Texas. He adds that his experience at the district level helps in decision-making because he is able to detect the implications of the decision on the people in the field.

He was a superintendent of schools for over five years, and he has been principal or assistant principal at the elementary, junior high, and high school level.

The following is a summary of an interview with Dr. Zamora conducted by Irma Guadarrama, including written remarks presented to us by him at a later date after his review of the interview transcript.

Please note that the names mentioned in this article are not pseudonyms as were used in the previous interviews.

A Brief History of the Accountability Plan

The key players are the people in our accountability department led by Dr. Ruben Olivares, Deputy Commissioner for Accountability and the Commissioner, Dr. Lionel Meno. Then, of course, people from the field and other TEA staff that had an interest in student learning and student performance were involved with the development of the system. Of course, accountability has been with us for quite a while. There have been changes in the system, most significant of which is that over the last two years accountability has moved from a process-oriented type of a system to a more results- or performance-based system. Accountability as we know it today places a strong emphasis on student performance, particularly on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS).

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Expected Outcomes

I believe that the state goal for excellence and equity in student learning clearly communicates we have higher expectations for student learning--not just for some students but for all students, regardless of ethnicity, socio-economic status, or gender.

To attain this goal and to achieve high levels of performance by all students will require that we closely examine our current practices and determine the extent to which these practices are contributing to the desired goal. We have both a challenge and an opportunity to restructure our educational system in such a way that our schools are responsive to all students and to their learning needs, rather than all students having to respond to a single program that may or may not help students experience high levels of success. Such a process requires examining current learning results for all students by ethnicity, socio-economic level, and gender.

Establishing the discrepancy between what is and what should be is important in identifying the need and creating a rationale for change.

We need to ask such questions as "How do our students compare with expected results?" "What do we believe about student learning?" "What are we doing? How do current educational policies and prac-

tices align with research?" Responses to these questions can be triggers for change. Then, steps should be taken to close the gap between what is and what should be in such areas as learning expectations, grouping practices, and promotion/retention practices.

Given the increasing diversity of our student population and the increasing number of students who enter school speaking a language other than English, it is important that schools be more sensitive and responsive. It is important that these youngsters be viewed as capable of learning rather than their language difference being considered a disabling factor.

Accountability Plan Is Not New

Accountability is not new; however, the current accountability system being linked to accreditation is. We've been testing students since the late 1970s. We've changed the test names, the test expectations, and so forth, but now the accountability is different in that we're focusing more on student learning and results as being the primary criteria for accreditation of districts.

Future Uses of the Accountability Process

The plan is to make better use of assessments and the AIS indicators, but we are also developing other assessments and adding other grades. Currently, other assessment measures such as high school end-of-course tests are being developed. The accountability department is now in the process of determining the procedures to be used in identifying the criteria that will be used over the next two to five years.

When we look at the role of the principal, we see principals being instructional leaders, but at the same time they've got to manage; they've got to deal with the community, with parents, and with students.

Role of Agency in Restructuring Efforts

We have been consistent in delivering a message of excellence and equity in student learning. *Excellence* means we expect students to perform at levels that will allow them to be successful in the real world.

Equity means that we expect all students to perform at high levels, regardless of ethnicity, socio-economic level, or gender. This also means that if a performance gap exists among the different groups, the gap is expected to be closed.

Training Needs of Principal

I think the role of the principal over time has changed. More and more we're saying that the principal needs to be more knowledgeable about instruction, about curriculum, about assessment, and about how those three relate to each other. When we look at the role of the principal, we see principals being instructional leaders, but at the same time they've got to manage; they've got to deal with the community, with parents, and with students. So their jobs are multi-vested, and their requirements are different. I would expect that the principal first be very knowledgeable of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and the relationship between those three.

Second, they need to possess problem-solving skills and be capable of managing change. Those who are not able to adapt find it a great deal more difficult to work with change and help others cope with it. Also, I think they would have to be very familiar with the whole concept of staff development and site-based decision making. It is important that principals understand the process of decision making and the importance of involving the appropriate stakeholders. I recognize that not all decision making is going to be of one type, but the principal has to be knowledgeable of those options, and when to use which decision making process. More and more we're about consensus decision making, developing partnerships, and collaboration.

I think one of the important things for principals now is to be cognizant of the changes that we're experiencing in our demographics—in terms of the students we now work with and serve. We need to be very sensitive and responsive to those needs. Becoming knowledgeable of, and being able to work with, not only with the

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students but with the parents of that student population, is very important.

Top-Down, or Bottom-Up?

From the standpoint of the State Education Agency, I think that more and more we are wanting to be about providing flexibility to districts, but we are willing to provide leadership through initiatives and other forms of influence. We would like to provide districts with the flexibility to make decisions about programs that work for their students at the local level. There is a great diversity across the state, and what works in one area may not work somewhere else. Yet, we are still driven by what we know regarding students, student learning, what's effective instruction, and what the research tells us.

What you see, then, is that on the one hand we, as a state, are setting expectations in terms of what students are supposed to learn and providing the assessments to determine whether or not they're learning. The non-negotiables are students and student learning, and what is negotiable is the program.

A system in which people work together toward a common vision and common goals and act together to achieve desired results will make greater progress than a system that is solely top-down or bottom-up. Consensus building where all stakeholders share responsibility for actions and results creates a sense of ownership and commitment.

Accountability for Language Minority Students

The concern is that our populations are different; that we have students with different socio-economic status, etc.—factors that we have no control over. When we look, though, at the performance of the students and the world that they're exiting into when they graduate, the reality is that regardless of who the students are, regardless of ethnicity or socio-economic background, the world out there has certain expectations about what they need to do in order to succeed. Our responsibility, then, is to create conditions in our schools so that those students will also exit our programs with the skills required to be successful.

Accountability criteria need to be developed that will allow for a better assessment of language minority students. The use of oral language development tests, or other assessments to measure literacy, including listening, speaking, and writing skills, and English language development would provide a means for determining both performance and progress made. Development of Spanish assessments would also be helpful. While I view these measures as positive, I am concerned that current instructional practices may not be preparing students to be successful with Spanish assessments. The need exists and action must be taken. Commissioner Meno has asked staff to work with educators from across the state to come up with recommendations on this issue.

Impact of University Personnel

What can the universities do? I think it's important to work both in training teachers and training administrators. Because, while you may work in training the teachers, the teachers still go into a system where the administration is creating the conditions and the programs for students. Teachers are part of a campus culture that may or may not be supportive of the bilingual education program. There's got to be work with administrators at all levels, and then work with the teachers.

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The other task that needs to be done I think, is to get bilingual education to be seen as a regular program and not as a special or a remedial program. A great deal of work needs to be done with regard to the beliefs and expectations of kids' ability to learn. There are many misconceptions about the children entering our schools speaking other languages than English, and doubts that they really are as capable of learning as those that enter schools speaking English. I believe that expectations and attitudes determine much of what a person does--what we do with students and how we organize schools.

Most Pressing Concerns

The most pressing concern is the performance level of the students that are identified as limited English proficient. The Hispanic population is not scoring well. The second concern is the dropout problem that we have. Both, of course, need to be addressed. The system needs restructuring to respond to the needs of the various populations and the changing populations that we now serve. We have an increasingly diverse population; there is an increasing number of immigrants coming into our country who are also non-advantaged, and unless we rethink how we are delivering instruction to students and restructure accordingly, then the successes that can be experienced and that are possible will not be there.

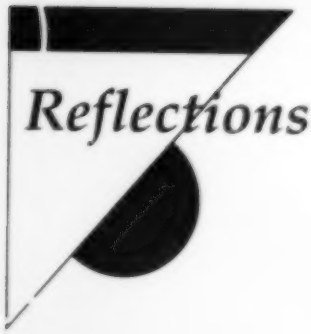
Now, I realize that it is not an easy task because of differences in terms of beliefs about what it takes to make a program, but I believe the practitioner must be committed to the child and continue to develop a better understanding of the learner. There is a need for commitment to the research about learning and conditions that contribute to learning and to changing practices that are not contributing to success. I can cite examples of what we do to the student with tracking, and what we do to kids when we have different expectations; what we do to kids' learning when we retain them; and what we do to kids' learning when we say, "If you don't learn it the first time, well that's your problem." When we don't change our practices to reflect that which we know contributes to more learning, then we shortchange students.

Changes to Be Made

We don't really spend the time and the resources needed to help teachers and administrators make the change. It is not right to expect people to behave differently when we don't provide them the training needed to do different things. Certainly we need to move to having more staff development days and, as an agency, we continue to support the notion of staff development. In fact, in the last legislative session, we proposed 20 days of staff development with five days of being added to the school year beginning this year. That did not come through, but we continue to allow districts to request waivers, and by requesting waivers districts can have up to 15 days of training. That is critical, and, of course, with the training goes the big money that is needed to do that.

Optimism or Pessimism About the Future?

I'm optimistic about the future. Changes are occurring in what schools are doing and improvements are already occurring in student performance in all groups. It's not occurring as fast as we would like to see it occur, but it's happening. And any time that we look at making improvements, it's going to be a long-term venture rather than a quick fix. But I'm optimistic. TAAS scores are improving. SAT and ACT scores are increasing. I believe that educators are wanting to make the changes even though they are not easy.



The State Commissioner of Education could not have made a better selection for the job of executive assistant than Dr. Roberto Zamora. He has the experience, knowledge, and insight to play a role in leadership at the state level. Among the many excellent ideas he shared with us are:

- the need for changing the role of the principal to a well-informed instructional leader, manager, and problem-solver, skillful in implementing change;
- the importance of consensus decision-making, developing partnerships, and collaborations;
- the need to respond appropriately to the diverse (culturally and linguistically) populations of our schools.

Dr. Zamora's conviction for improving education for all students is substantiated by his knowledge and understanding of the problems of language minority students which have consistently plagued our schools: the pervasive misconceptions of the capabilities of language minority children and the negative perceptions toward bilingual education and ESL programs that service these students; the well-publicized, documented failure rates among Hispanic students; the destructive tracking practices, low expectations toward language minorities, and overall apathy toward improving the educational process for language minority students.

However, some of Dr. Zamora's ideas have yet to be incorporated in the state agency's plans for action. The following describes some of these points of conflict excerpted from Dr. Zamora's interview:

1. One of the roles of the agency is to promote excellence and equity. Dr. Zamora stated that in light of that role, that "...we expect all students to perform at high levels...This means that if a performance gap exists among the different groups, the gap is expected to be closed." However, the accountability system has another way of fulfilling its role in ensuring equity. The plan states that "whenever any African-American, Hispanic, White, or economically disadvantaged student population comprises more than 20 percent of the total population, if 20 percent or fewer of that group passes all TAAS tests taken, the district accreditation status will be lowered to "accredited warned" (TEA, p. 12). In other words, the districts who have had a low enrollment of language minority students, the majority of whom have consistently failed the TAAS, will be cited as "unacceptable" by the agency, even though their overall passing rate is acceptable. This strategy can best be described not as having an equity intent but rather serving as an incentive to schools who are directly affected to find drastic, often inappropriate ways to "teach to the test" to the students.

2. Dr. Zamora asserted that the agency is now providing appropriate assessments to determine whether the students are learning but that a task group is formulating plans for alternative assessment procedures for language minority students. He also commented that districts have the flexibility to implement programs that will help

them achieve desired outcomes. However, the current TAAS instruments are questionable in their intent to truly measure what they purport to measure. Are they assessing content or English language proficiency in language minority students? It seems that the agency needs to determine what they want to measure and devise more appropriate means to do so. For example, why not test students in their native language to assess their mastery of the content, and use other means to assess or monitor their progress in learning English as a second language? The scope of flexibility allowed schools in designing and implementing their programs is narrow. When schools are cited as "low performing," the only flexibility they have is limited to whatever will result in higher test scores, in English. This leads to the following point of conflict.

4. The role of the state, Dr. Zamora stated, is to set expectations in terms of what students are supposed to learn and provide assessments accordingly. "The non-negotiables are students and student learning, and what is negotiable is the program." Perhaps, herein lies one of the major sources of frustration for many teachers. Having the flexibility to design one's own program often misleads principals to claim a license to implement any program, regardless whether it complies with state law concerning bilingual education or not, as long as it will lead to increased (English) test scores among language minority students.

5. Finally, Dr. Zamora stated the need for restructuring the system. Does "the system" include the state agency and its approach and strategies for leading our efforts to an improved educational system? If the agency perceives the need for change as Dr. Zamora perceives it, then we may begin to feel confident that our leaders at the policy-making levels are indeed worthy of our following.

Advocates of a performance-based accountability system may argue about the need for high-stakes testing, the "shape-up or perish" approach inherent in the current accountability system. However, in performance-based accountability, there is greater responsibility to accurately and appropriately determine "what" needs to be assessed and "how." Assessment is crucial to educational reform; it is often noted as the driving force behind the wheels of change. With Dr. Zamora's support, we can successfully accomplish the important goals in ensuring that our programs are the very best for our students. After all, as Dr. Zamora said, "When we don't change our practices to reflect that which we know contributes to more learning, then we shortchange students."

Point of View

Language Minority Students: Finders or Losers of the American Dream?

by Irma Guadarrama, Ph.D.

For so many children, education is the key to a better quality of life. This is especially true in the case of over six million school-age language-minority students nationwide who have been identified as in need of bilingual education and/or English as a Second Language programs. In Texas alone, there are almost 400,000 school-age children who qualify for bilingual education/ESL. This count does not take into consideration the children who have been exited out of bilingual education programs but still require instructional support before being completely mainstreamed. However, the latest report from the Texas Education Agency's accountability office (TEA, 1993) has cast doubts in the minds of stakeholders that education really does open doors to a better quality of life. In this report, Texas' districts and schools were rated using categories of *exemplary, recognized, accredited, unacceptable performance* and *clearly unacceptable performance*. As one would expect, the majority of unacceptable districts and campuses are those whose majority of students are language minority and/or ethnic minority. And, the recognized districts and schools are generally suburban schools with a majority of Anglo, middle-class students. Indeed, there were very few surprises in this report. In fact, it appeared very similar to the public disclosures of years past in which districts and their campuses were hierarchically ranked according to achievement test scores. In fairness to the plan, however, it is too early to determine its full effect on the educational programs for language minority students. Nevertheless, some preliminary observations pointing to its ineffectiveness are noted, specifically the method used to determine which schools are performing well and which are not, and its effectiveness as part of an educational reform plan.

First of all, it's important to recognize, as state officials often remind us, that the accountability plan was initiated as a result of a mandate from the legislature that enacted Senate Bill 7. The bill states that the plan should provide "a comprehensive, integrated framework for the system that will be used to accredit school districts and to provide the impetus for continual improvement of student performance through public disclosure of results, and the application of specific, sequential rewards, sanctions, interventions and technical support to districts and campuses statewide" (TEA, 1993, p. 3). The mandate for an accountability system is common among most states in our country, emanating from the public outcry to improve our educational system. The development of the specific plan, however, is the task of the accountability office under the direction of the state commissioner of education, Dr. Lionel R. Meno.

The State Board of Education was presented with proposed "academic excellence indicators" and subsequently approved them. The state agency used them in their accountability plan to base their ratings and accreditation system. These seven indicators are: the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), a set of criterion-referenced tests (the current plan requires students in grade three to take the math and reading sections, fourth graders to take the content area and writing sections, and eighth and tenth graders to take all sections); attendance, 97 percent average yearly attendance to be specific; drop-out rate, as calculated as the total number of drop-outs in grades seven through twelve, divided by the number of students enrolled in those grades

The latest report from the Texas Education Agency's accountability office (TEA, 1993) has cast doubts in the minds of stakeholders that education really does open doors to a better quality of life.

It's not enough that these students are faced with harsh realities outside of the school; now their schools are "unsafe havens," no longer providing them with the needed boost to achieve the success that has eluded them throughout their lives.

for more than 30 consecutive days; high school end-of-course exams, in Algebra I and Biology I to be administered in 93-94; percent of graduating students passing the TASP equivalency, or simply the number of students passing the TAAS exam in high school that subsequently receive their high school diploma; high school graduation rate; percent of students taking and passing the scholastic aptitude test (SAT) and the American College Test (ACT). School districts will be rated "clearly unacceptable" and campuses will be rated "low performing" if they have "20 percent or fewer of all students taking the TAAS tests passing all tests taken across all grade levels for all subjects" (TEA, 1993, p.12-15).

While these academic excellence indicators are each distinct from one another, collectively they represent the same thing. That is, students who have difficulty passing all portions of the TAAS exam tend not to attend school on a regular basis, tend to do poorly in science and math, tend to drop-out of school, tend to not aspire to attending college, and tend to drop-out when they fail the exit TAAS exam. The lack of variability in these indicators results in a biased, narrow view of school performance levels, not unlike the assessment practices which critics call socially irresponsible (Neill, 1993).

According to Monty Neill, associate director of the National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairText), a socially responsible assessment system first of all, helps children learn and as such, focuses on the relationship between students and teacher. Furthermore, the results should be useful to both teachers and students in improving that relationship (Neill, 1993). Secondly, a socially responsible assessment system is fair and equitable and does not label or pigeonhole children. Doing so is an injustice to the lives of the children and the community and may actually cause serious damage to them. Fairness demands that the assessment system be flexible, not standardized, so it can serve students from diverse cultures equally well. An equitable plan promotes high standards, yet allows students to take diverse routes to alternative destinations. Above all, equity underscores the importance of not using tests as the sole basis for making decisions about students.

Despite its claim that it is a fair and equitable plan, the state accountability plan is not. It is unfair and inequitable on the grounds that it systematically pushes out the "marginal" student, the student on the brink who needs perhaps the most help after the handicapped student. These are the ethnic minority students, many of them poor or are near poverty levels, who speak another language other than English and whose parents have access to a very different "culture capital" that is incompatible with the schools'. The plan considers only a narrow view of what these students achieve (or don't achieve) in their schooling process. In its attempt to improve or increase the educational standards of our schools, the plan seeks to succeed by publicly denouncing the efforts of teachers, principals and parents in schools with large populations of ethnic and language minority students, labeling them as failures, keeping students who unsatisfactorily complete the exit TAAS exam from receiving an earned diploma and, in effect, marginalizing students even more. It's not enough that these students are faced with harsh realities outside of the school; now their schools are "unsafe havens," no longer providing them with the needed boost to achieve the success that has eluded them throughout their lives. In the end, the accountability plan may serve to succeed in raising test scores (or it may not), but in the process fail to help students that need the help, losing them to the drop-out statistics, as well as losing dedicated teachers who have lost all confidence in their leaders.

A good way to show how the accountability plan not only fails to consider its impact on students' learning, but on issues

affecting the curriculum and language policy is to describe a real-life scenario in one of the so-called "low performing, accredited warned schools": A third grade teacher, Ms. D, has a classroom of students who span the entire linguistic range: there are Spanish monolingual children, some are Spanish dominant, some are equally proficient in both languages, but all require the special teaching skills that Ms. D has acquired through experience and education. Her students will be waived from taking the TAAS exam because state policy dictates that students who are "limited English proficient" are waived from this English language exam for one year. This means that Ms. D can continue providing these students with the most effective pedagogy, utilizing both their native language and English as a second language strategies, to help her students achieve academically and toward proficiency in English. However, the following year, in grade four, these students will be tested on social studies and science content and writing skills in English. To do well on these tests, students must master the social and academic levels of the English language, which is beyond beginning and intermediate levels and even some students at the advanced level.

Research studies have substantially proven that students will take five to seven years to acquire the academic English language. And, in her own experience in working with second language learners, Ms. D knows that her students must acquire the academic language if they are to have a chance at passing the TAAS exams the following year. She has to make a decision on whether to teach her students using a learner-centered approach and rely on her students to intrinsically transition from their native language to English, or should she work to provide her students with a skewed curriculum, and, in effect, "teach to the test"? Her principal, under fire from the district central offices for receiving a "low performance" rating, resolves Ms. D.'s dilemma to a certain extent by ordering the teachers to transition children from their native language to English, regardless if the students are ready. Now it seems that Ms. D's professional judgement concerning the curriculum and the pedagogy must be suspended or re-aligned to

On a Personal Note...

When I think about the education of today's language minority students, I often reflect upon my own high school experiences three decades ago. The thought of dropping out never occurred to me even though I still considered myself a second language learner (my first language was Spanish, but I started school in a Texas public school), and was holding a necessary part-time job. I honestly didn't think the drop-out problem was a serious one, since many of my friends went to high school and graduated even though I knew some of them were not going to make it to college. I didn't even know if I was going. Fortunately, the Lion's Club came through for me with a $50 scholarship, and fortune was definitely on my side with the near-completion of a brand new Tarrant County Junior College campus on the south side of Fort Worth, Texas. I didn't know what the Lion's Club was about; it could have been a zoological organization for all I knew! But, the scholarship was enough to point me in the right direction. College was affordable, at least for now.

The next luck of the draw was the Teacher Corps program. The program helped me finish college and choose a career in teaching. I never regretted making the choice, and I am forever grateful to the Teacher Corps.

I am now a university professor, holding a Ph.D., and have twenty years of experience as an educator. If I had had the obstacles, i.e., TAAS tests, end-of-course tests, exit TAAS, etc., that students have today, I honestly don't know if I would have finished high school, let alone have gone to college. Many of my friends would not have graduated from high school or made decent lives for themselves either. I thank my lucky stars for the opportunities I have had; my deepest desire now is to help students reach their highest goals.

—Irma Guadarrama

accommodate an accountability plan that has clearly overstepped its boundaries and is now the driving force that determines which curriculum to use, when children in bilingual education should be transitioned, and demands that teachers forestall their professional judgement and do what they are told to do.

The state accountability plan lists several consequences for districts and schools that fail to increase their students' test scores. Among these include evaluation visits by local practitioners who have been especially trained by the Division of Accreditation and who should help the campuses according to a specific plan established by that office; the appointment of a "monitor, master, management team, or board of managers to oversee the operations of the district and low-performing campuses....paid by the district" (TEA, 1993, p. 23); and the most serious consequence for districts and campuses who remain within the accredited warned or low-performing category for two or more years, "district annexation or campus closure, in which the commissioner is authorized to adjoin the district with another or, in the case of a school campus, close the campus and assign the students to another campus that "adequately meets the educational needs of its students" (TEA, 1993, p. 27).

The idea that schools can be improved by people other than the principals and teachers clearly overlooks the valuable contributions and resources at hand, as well as the school culture that is unique to each school.

There are several concerns regarding the intervention measures developed in anticipation of districts and schools not complying with the mandates. The means of helping districts "shape-up or perish" is indicative of the system's reliance on "external others," instead of facilitating the systematic development of the district's or individual campuses' internal means to identity the problems and find unique solutions to them. The idea that schools can be improved by people other than the principals and teachers clearly overlooks the valuable contributions and resources at hand, as well as the school culture that is unique to each school. More importantly, the prevailing message of distrust inherent in the mandate is obvious to teachers and principals as well as parents.

Ironically, the high-stakes testing and drastic (and unrealistic) threats of district annexation and school closures may be fruitless in their attempts to change teacher and principal behavior, especially in schools with large numbers of language minority students. Consider a recent national survey conducted by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in which nearly 80 percent of the teachers interviewed believe that most of the causes for school failure among students have to do with factors over which teachers have little control, i.e., lack of parental support, nutrition, etc. (Schlechty, 1990). When a large number of teachers tend to blame other factors other then themselves, the only real victims of such an accountability system are the students. Students are left with a school in a state of panic: their teachers, who are demoralized, disgruntled, and distrustful; their principal, who demands a back-to-basics curriculum and extrinsic transitioning from native language to English. Additionally, whatever was gained in promoting professionalism and shared decision-making through site-based management must now be suspended.

What Kind of System Is Needed?

Accountability plans that facilitate, not intervene unproductively in the educational process, and produce results based on sound pedagogical practices, and follow, not contradict, research findings are desirable. Accountability systems were created to help schools in their endeavors to provide the best education possible for all of their students. Some authors, such as Richard Schlechty (1990), contend that accountability systems are promoted chiefly by the business community and press who seem to doubt that teachers are working to their full capacity. Schlechty has also observed that teachers and administrators who protest or criticize the system are often viewed as irresponsible

and trying to escape accountability. Perhaps, this is why teachers' and principals' voices of protest are rarely heard.

Accountability systems are most effective when they are well-coordinated and balanced with other divisional programs at the state, local and professional levels such as professional development and bilingual/ESL education. In addition, shifting the roles of the accreditation staff and others who work in collaboration with the schools, from the authoritative roles currently in place to facilitators and coordinators is more appropriate. These two aspects of an accountability system, i.e., facilitating change within the schools and professional development of our leaders are briefly addressed in the following sections.

Facilitating Change Within the Schools

In the last decade of educational reform we have learned that although certain school characteristics or staff behaviors are desirable in improving education, using a top-down approach to facilitating change is not effective (Fullan, 1982). Instead, the emerging focus is on change tailored to the uniqueness of each individual school's culture, and school staff working together to bring about the needed change (Schmoker & Wilson, 1993; Barth, 1990; Lieberman, 1988). If schools are to improve from within, they must be provided with assistance to do this effectively. When schools develop into communities of learners and engage in the development of self-assessment profiles, the process can be structured to facilitate change from the bottom-up and in effect, serve to help schools become more effective, at the same time collect on-going evaluative data (Guadarrama, 1992 and In Press). Accountability systems that facilitate in this process, directly or indirectly, can be productive and positive. To assist in the process, a modified model of intervention for the state accountability office must be created. Policy must be implemented and expertise provided in a way that facilitates internally controlled, bottom-up management.

Leadership Development

Substantial changes at all levels in every aspect conceivable are needed to improve educational process for minority students, especially language minority students. One of the most important changes needed is in the leadership development of principals. Leadership for restructuring or reforming our schools has been re-defined in much of the emerging literature on the topic. In his book, Leadership for Tomorrow's Schools, Patterson (1993) defines leading as "the process of influencing others to achieve mutually agreed upon purposes for the organization." The emphasis made by Patterson is on the fact that building leadership skills in our leaders is a lengthy and intense *process; influencing others* implies that persuasion and interaction prevails over bossing and coercion; and, *achieving mutually agreed upon purposes* implies that the goals are supported by those involved who in turn support persons in the lead.

Patterson asserts that tomorrow's leaders value: a) the active participation of all members of an organization in any discussion or decision affecting them; b) diversity in perspectives; c) employees resolving conflict in healthy ways that lead to stronger solutions for complex issues; d) employees acknowledging mistakes and learning, using research, applying technology and using evaluation data to improve performance.

- Reflective practice, or giving and receiving feedback, considering past and current actions in light of new information.
- Supporting collegiality, or using group process, networking, team-building, facilitating, modeling, trust-building, and using collaboration.
- Creating leadership density, or recognizing, nurturing, developing leadership growth.
- Identifying leverage points, or recognizing and capitalizing on leverage to improve student learning.

Leadership development is crucial in creating and sustaining innovation that improves educational process. The need for creative, well-trained leaders should be a top priority in schools with language minority students. Professional development leaders need to direct their attention to staff development strategies and activities that are

Policy must be implemented and expertise provided in a way that facilitates internally controlled, bottom-up management.

campus-based and serve to create or nurture communities of learners.

Leadership at the state level is especially important in assisting school districts in their efforts to ensure that all principals are not only well-informed of the research data and state rulings concerning bilingual education and other programs for language minority students, but are applying the most effective, innovative strategies available.

Conclusion

Educational reform will obviously remain in our midst for a very long time. Reflecting on lessons learned is critical if we are to channel our precious resources in the directions that lead to the best results possible. If we narrow our evaluative focus too much and ignore the variety of problems inherent in teaching language minority children, we diminish our professionalism. As a result, we may fulfill the prophecy of the old cliche, "getting too much of a good thing." Above all, we don't want to shortchange our students in the name of progress.

Language minority students deserve an equal chance to pursue the "American Dream." But we need to ask the question, "Are the current policies and programs helping or hindering our students?" Knowing that thousands of students are counting on us, the educators and policy makers, to help them realize their dreams is reason enough to make us think critically and carefully every step of the way.

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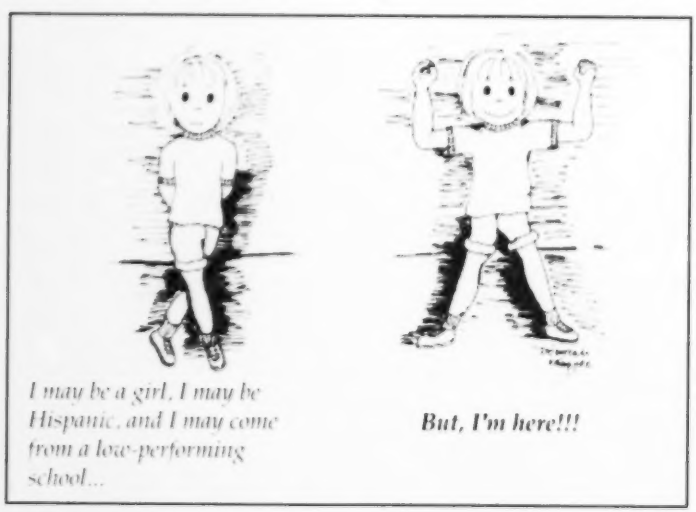

Do you have a comment or a question? Call our toll free number, (800) 863-5408, and leave a message on our answering machine. You may remain anonymous, but please give us an idea of your general location.

Thank you!

Who Says You Can't Do Research? Educators are Researchers Every Day!

by Flora Roebuck, Ph.D.

Principals and teachers, like the practitioners of other professions, engage in research activities on almost a daily basis. They design and administer data collection instruments, conduct observations, and aggregate data to describe or compare subjects and/or groups. They analyze their data in order to identify similarities or differences, changes, and patterns or themes. They draw inferences from their data, make conclusions, and translate their discoveries into action plans. Unfortunately, however, these daily investigations and reflections usually are not perceived by the professional educator as being "research" because of three widely-held conceptions.

First, research is considered to be a precise and very scientific system of specific methods and procedures conducted for the purpose of generating a body of educational knowledge. Second, it's believed you can't do research unless you do statistics. And, third, research is seen as being monolithic...a huge unitary block that has to be swallowed whole or not at all. In fact, however, all

Table 1: Four Levels of Research

Level	Major Purpose or Activity	Types of Issues Addressed	Typical Questions Researched by Educators
Descriptive	Collect and Summarize Data	What is (was) the situation/problem?	Can María hear the difference between "sh" and "ch"?
		What is (was) happening or changing?	What are the fourth grade students' reading interests?
Internal Application	Detect and Validate Internal Relationships, Differences, or Results	What are the important or themes?	What are the differences between the science motives of boys and girls?
		What is causing which to happen?	José reads better this year. Is it because of my new program, he's a year older, or his dad said he'd punish him if he flunked?
		How did the change evolve?	
External Generalization	Determine Whether Findings or Results Are Valid	Will the same results come about in different circumstances?	Will this program that worked for my students help students in other classes or schools?
Theoretical Research	Generate, Extend, or Test a Theory	Is there some underlying principle?	Does praise result in more effective learning than does punishment?
		What links or explains these happenings?	Is the principal's leadership style important to the school's success?

three of these perceptions are misconceptions.

Research may be done for purposes which range from description of existing circumstances or problems through making an administrative or curricular decision about a specific individual, program or group to testing or generating a theory. Far from being a single system of methods and procedures, there are more than a dozen currently recognized categories of methodologies for doing research in education. About half of these methods are neither precise nor scientific although all of them are rigorous and each has its own way of ensuring the validity of results.

As for statistics, only a few categories of research (primarily experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational, survey, mega-analysis, and retrospective chart studies) rely to any great extent on statistical validation or inference. In fact, statistics is a "Johnny-come-lately" to educational research. It was adopted from agriculture in the early decades of this century in order to provide researchers with a way of summarizing and validating the differences and similarities among groups of highly variable individuals.

Perusal of a few articles by researchers criticizing the work of others who use a different methodology will instantly dissipate any idea of monolithic research. Nor does research have to be undertaken in one big gulp; there are at least four different levels of research, each of which can be complete in itself. Table 1 on page 51 briefly summarizes the four levels and provides examples of research that educators typically carry out on each level.

Education's body of knowledge began as a collection of the professional lore which principals and teachers had generated from their day-to-day experiences and shared, generally by word-of-mouth, with others. It was not until we needed to demonstrate that teaching, too, was a respectable profession that research became so esoteric and demanding only specialists could do it. Currently, that change is reversing itself. Today the natural study of educational processes and the teacher-as-researcher role has once again made it not only acceptable, but in fact imperative, for the educational practitioner to become involved in the design, conduct, and publication of research. As a case in point, all the principals who receive this publication are invited to participate in a stimulus-survey study of reactions to the Texas Statewide Accountability System.

In a stimulus survey study, persons of varying characteristics in similar but not necessarily identical settings are asked to react to the same stimulus. Their responses to the stimulus are then examined in various ways. If you would like to participate in this study, you will need to read the stimulus which is Dr. Guadarrama's article beginning on page 42 in this issue. Then, complete the survey questionnaire below. You can do this in one of two ways: (a) write your answers and mail to Dr. Irma Guadarrama, Department of Reading and Bilingual Education, P. O. Box 23029, Denton, Texas, 76204-1029; or (b) plan your answers, then call toll free, 1 (800) 863-5408, and record your answers on our answering machine. All responses should be anonymous. Results will be reported back to you and summary data forwarded to Dr. Lionel Meno, Commissioner, Texas Education Agency.

Today, the natural study of educational processes and the teacher-as-researcher role has once again made it not only acceptable, but in fact imperative, for the educational practitioner to become involved in the design, conduct, and publication of research.

Please call our toll-free number, (800) 863-5408, and record your responses to the survey beginning on the next page. Or, if you like, mail your responses to: Dr. Irma Guadarrama, Texas Woman's University, P. O. Box 23029, Denton, Texas, 76204-1029.

Stimulus Survey

1. The level of your school is:

__primary __upper elementary __middle school __junior high school __senior high school

2. The approximate ethnic composition of your school is:

___% White ___% Afro-American ___% Hispanic ___% Asian ___% American Indian ___% Other

3. English is a second language for approximately what percent of your student body? ___%

4. Approximately how large is your school?

___ less than 300 students ___ 300-600 students ___ 601-1000 students ___ more than 1000 students.

5. How long have you been a principal at that school?

___one or two years ___three to five years ___five to ten years ___ten to twenty years ___more than twenty years.

6. Did you read Dr. Guadarrama's article beginning on page 42 of this publication? __ Yes __No

Have you obtained additional information about the accountability program from other sources?
___Yes ___No
If "YES", what were those sources?

7. How fair do you think the academic excellence indicators are for your student population? What is your basis for thinking that?

8. Are there other academic excellence indicators that should be considered in assessing the quality of learning on your campus?

Stimulus Survey continued

9. What accreditation status rating did your school earn last year? What are some factors or data that help explain how or why your school was rated that way? Were these data/factors considered when your rating was assigned?

10. What kinds of data or information do you think the state should take into consideration in applying academic excellence indicators?

11. What are your reactions to the idea of a Board of Managers for low-performing schools and to the use of Campus Closure as a way of ensuring quality education for students?

12. What other comments would you like to make about the Texas statewide Accountability System?

NOTE: Responses may be recorded on our answering machine by dialing toll free (800) 863-5408, or mailed to Dr. Irma Guadarrama, Dept. of Reading and Bilingual Education, P. O. Box 23029, Denton, Texas, 76203-1029.

Preview of Next Volume

Teacher as Researcher: Innovations/Problem-Solving in Bilingual/ESL

What would you do?

Mrs. Mendoza*, a kindergarten teacher with four years experience, has transferred to a school which has a small, but growing, language minority population. Eager to start a new year in a new school, Mrs. Mendoza arranges her bilingual education classroom to meet the needs of her students. She anticipates having a group of students who have varying proficiencies in English and Spanish.

Her class consists of students who are all Spanish-speaking; some are monolingual Spanish-speaking, some are Spanish dominant with varying proficiencies in English. According to research, an effective program should include a native language component in which children will have the opportunity to develop concepts and skills in their dominant language. Thus, besides English as a second language, Mrs. Mendoza will also incorporate a native language component in her program.

After three weeks into the program, the principal requests a conference with Mrs. Mendoza. She tells her that she is to implement an ESL program rather than a bilingual education program. "After all," the principal tells her, "we have done very well without it (bilingual education)." This was a disturbing statement for Mrs. Mendoza, not only because she knew that bilingual education was the appropriate program for her students, but because she knew that all of the Hispanic students in her school who took the TAAS exam failed.

In our next issue, we will include Mrs. Mendoza's interview. Please use our toll-free line, (800) 863-5408, to let us know what you would do. We will publish your responses in our next issue. You may remain anonymous, but please provide us with a general location. Thank you.

* Name has been changed.

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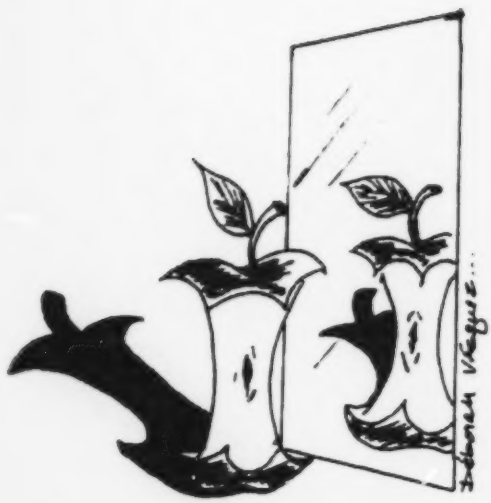

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